Adventure

March 1st

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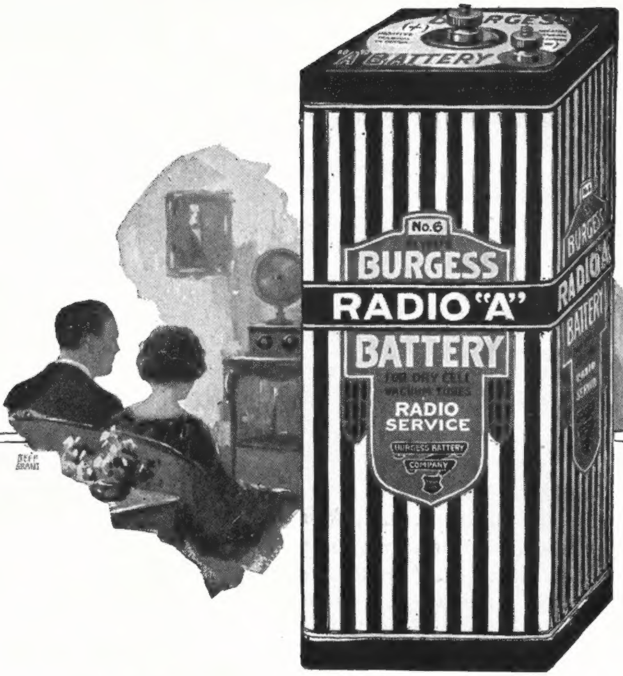
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Our passion for stories of highwaymen, pirates, and other outdoor adventurers is only natural, for at heart we are all rovers; and all feel the pulse quicken and nerves tingle when we are off with them in the fresh invigorating atmosphere of the broad highway of adventure.

Few can resist the spell of the stirring career of Crichton, the dashing Scot, gallant and courtier, who adventured to Paris in the stormy days of Catherine de' Medici. His daring escapades and hairbreadth escapes fill a volume, vivid with action, that has given him, too, undying fame. The stories of these and other adventurers, set forth with a vitality and power that have given them immortality, are told by the brilliant author of many equally exciting

Novels of Adventure

who was the first of the great triumvirate of English novelists that were the glory of the Victorian age—Ainsworth, Thackeray, and Dickens.

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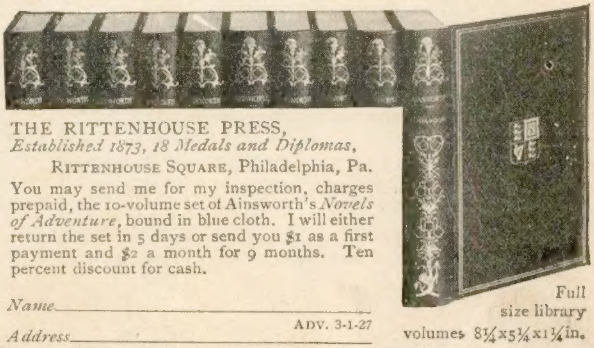

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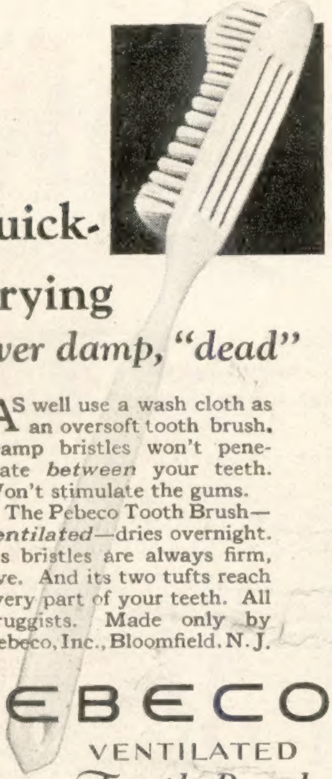

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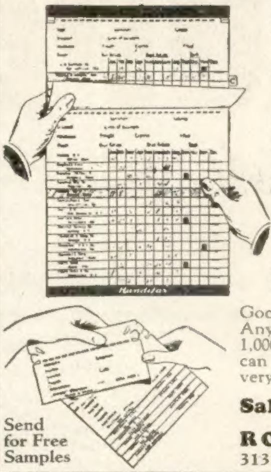

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VOL. LXI. NO. 6

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Issue of March 1

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, *Editor*

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Decorations by ROCKWELL KENT

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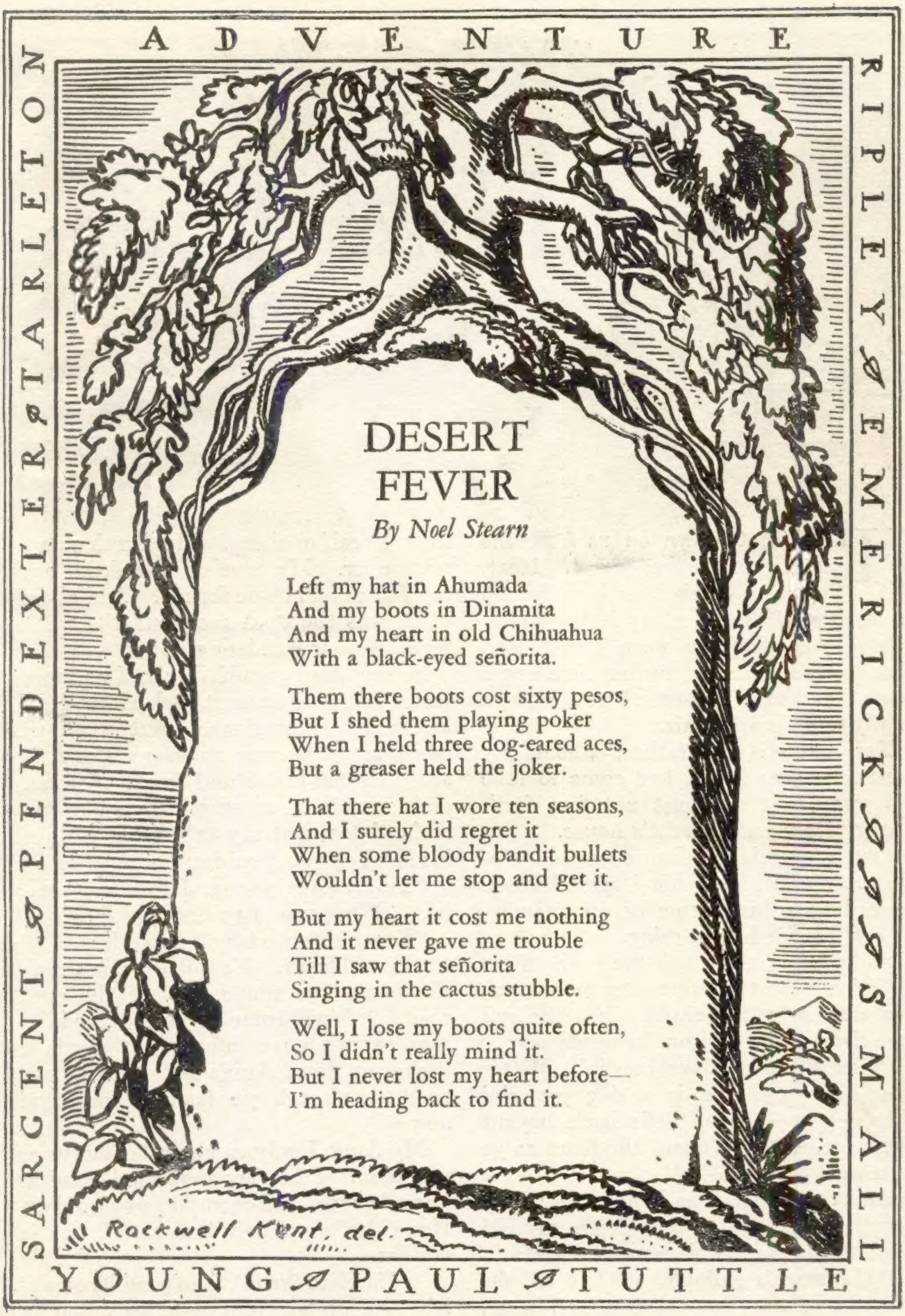
ADVENTURE
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DESERT FEVER

By Noel Stearn

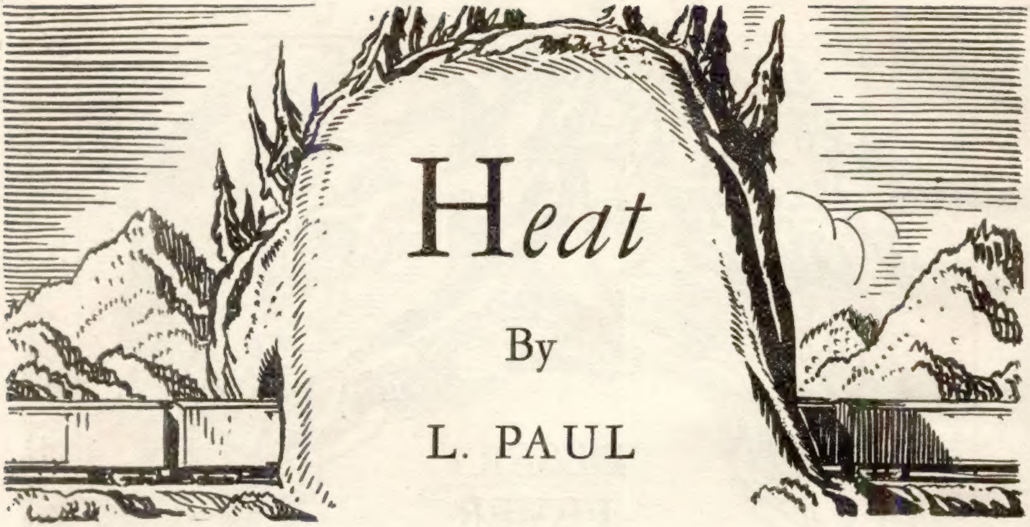
Left my hat in Ahumada
And my boots in Dinamita
And my heart in old Chihuahua
With a black-eyed señorita.

Them there boots cost sixty pesos,
But I shed them playing poker
When I held three dog-eared aces,
But a greaser held the joker.

That there hat I wore ten seasons,
And I surely did regret it
When some bloody bandit bullets
Wouldn't let me stop and get it.

But my heart it cost me nothing
And it never gave me trouble
Till I saw that señorita
Singing in the cactus stubble.

Well, I lose my boots quite often,
So I didn't really mind it.
But I never lost my heart before—
I'm heading back to find it.



Heat

By

L. PAUL

HEAT beat down on us from the pitch roof of the garret. Heat, redolent of fried food, welled up as we opened the door, my father and I. My feet scuffed the worn treads and risers of the stairs for the last time as we came down to a kitchen where my Aunt Emily was already astir.

For though my father, whom my mother's sister hated, had come to take me away, yet we must not fare forth hungry from an Upshant's house.

Outside Upshant's house sat old Upshant himself, my blind grandfather. According to his custom he was farming by ear this fine hot morning.

So he had sat through the years of his affliction. And morning after morning as I would come, a laggard, when the sun rose clear of the horizon, he would say:

"Heard them calves bawlin'. Better run down and see is a dog pesterin' them—" or—"Sheep bells back beyant the ridge. Did ye mend the fence as ye were told to?"

And this morning as I came out of the door, my tall father behind me, my old grandfather turned his head and said:

"The mare's gallopin' wild in th' far pasture. Funny how clear a man hears, mornings. Would it be that she's—"

He stopped, his mouth closing suddenly.

I would run no more to see what ailed mare or calf or sheep. My farming days were over. My mother was dead, and my father had come for me. And ahead of us was the open road and the whole world for our wandering.

So my blind grandfather said no more, but sat there as we went back within doors and ate our breakfast. But when we came to go he was no longer there. I searched the house and found him not, and would have searched barns and orchard too, but my tall father clapped his hand on my shoulder.

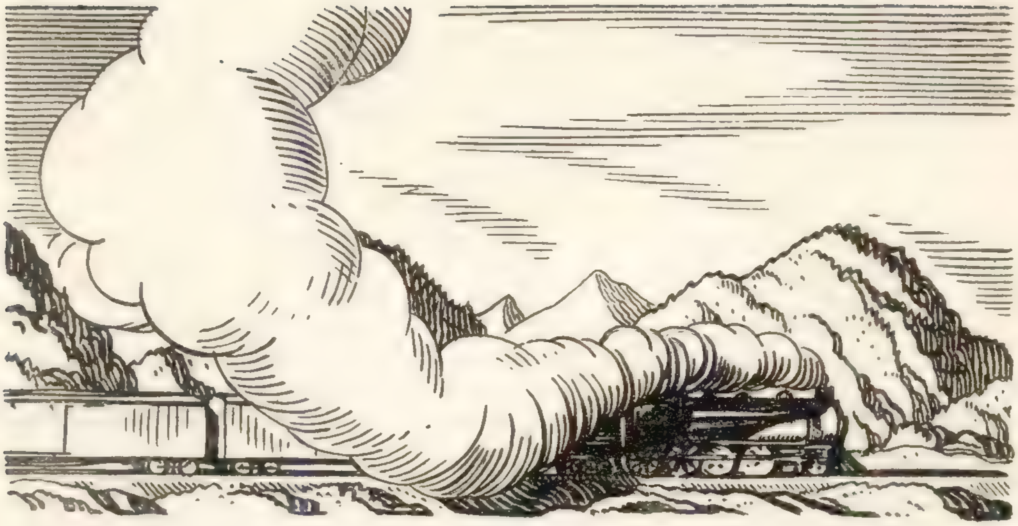
"Ye are over young, Jamie lad," said he. "What would ye find him for?"

"For to say good-by," I told him.

"Ye will learn. Ye will learn, in time!" He swung me round to face the open road. " 'Twill come to ye that sayin'—that sayin's no comfort, that words is useless at times, Jamie lad. Ye ha' said good-by, though ye knew it not, and now—"

My Aunt Emily came up behind us as we stood. I felt her rough red hand in mine, her stiff, toil-worn fingers fumbling. Her voice, not as shrill as usual, was in my ears.

" 'Tis a bad flittin'. No good'll come of it! And oh lad, ye'll come back, will ye not, afore—afore—" she nodded up the hill—"afore his time has come," she finished, and drew her rough red hand



away, leaving in mine something that crackled. Turning, I saw him up the hill, my old blind grandfather Upshant, cane tap-tapping on the hard-baked wagon rut of the lane that led on to the back pasture, walking slowly, steadily, out of my life, as I now must walk out of his.

Behind us the door closed. My father and I were alone, in a world grown suddenly wide, yet empty.

"Come!" he said, "come, Jamie lad. All's finished here."

WE CAME to the railroad. Down yonder yawned the station door, a black oblong that seemed to dance in the haze of the heat from cinder road-bed. Twin rails curved away and a tiny speck became the morning express.

" 'Tis ours?" I asked, but my father shook his head.

"Whatever for?" He countered question with question. "The likes of us? And plush cushions is hot, too, days like this." But his hand strayed to an empty pocket and I guessed that he was penniless.

In sudden pride I extended my hand, palm up and open, with the bill Aunt Emily had slipped into it. Said I—

"Ten dollars'll take us out o' here."

"No. No." He drew me across the track past the upper switch stand that guarded the end of the siding. "Ye'll travel as I travel from the start. No cheating, Jamie lad. No soft living for us. Ye must see life as I see it." We sank down into tall, fragrant grass across the ditch to wait.

The express roared up, stopped, crawled on again and disappeared. I had a glimpse of flushed faces at open windows, of a brass-bound conductor on the rear platform who mopped his forehead and said to a brakeman something that made that hardy animal wince.

"Ne'er try for to be a passenger-stiff in hot weather, Jamie lad" cautioned my father, giving me the ripe conclusions of long observation, rifling the storehouse of his memory for my benefit. "A man that must keep his blue coat on these days, is none too sweet in the temper. Onreasonable, likely. Yon conductor, now, he'd find ye sure, and heave ye off. Heat edges the temper of such folk. No, passenger trains in spring and fall, but never in a New Brunswick summer. So, we'll wait, we'll wait—"

"For what?" I asked.

"For a go-as-ye-please outfit—for the Comfort Limited!" he replied, and laughed. "When ye see a man wi' his coat off, we'll travel."

So it proved. The Comfort Limited

came, at last. Brakes ground, couplings jangled, and a coatless man came running from the distant caboose, past box-car and flat-car and gondola, past tender and engine, to unlock the switch. And as the long freight crawled on to the siding another man, coatless too, stumped heavily up toward the station where the agent gave him moist tissue-paper orders.

My father, looking at him as he came slowly back, smiled, and said—

"God made fat men. He sure made 'em wi' a purpose, Jamie lad. This here's our meat." Rising, he went toward him.

The fat man had paused midway down his train. He was, I guessed, the conductor. My father sauntered up. I followed, watched, then listened.

" 'Tis hot," said my father.

"Yonderbound, ye've said it." The fat conductor turned to wave at his brakeman, standing there by the switch. "We cross Ninety-two at Farley" he bawled, and the effort brought great beads of sweat out on his face.

He turned toward his caboose and I saw that his shirt was wet and flat against his back, between plump shoulders.

"We set them two boxes off at Farley." He was talking, evidently, to himself. "But the two flats an' that Erie Box, they're for Montreal. Fast freight'll pick 'em up." With that he stumped off.

"Now God bless fat men some more!" my father said, low, and followed him at a distance down the train.

The Erie Box was there, doors half open. The fat conductor flicked his hand out, his fingers brushing the sill as he walked past. The brakeman ahead was busy with that switch stand and a refractory lock.

The fat conductor paused, his back to the train, his eyes on cool woods that rose along the river bank.

" 'Tis hot for walkin'," said he. "Men is fools that walks with a noble-hearted railroad willin' to lug 'em about. Men is fools that walks this weather."

"Up, Jamie!" My father boosted me over the sill of the car and on hands and knees I crawled upon a dirty floor. I heard him behind me as he followed, and, outside, the conductor's voice, dwindling as he walked away:

" 'Tis hot for walkin'. Yet them's fools that stays at home. 'Tis the wise that travels, and none wiser than them that rides with Softy Shanks—"

The door of the Erie Box slid on its rasping iron wheels as my father drew it shut, and in the new, sudden darkness I could see nothing.

"Sure, God made fat men" chuckled my father. "Softy Shanks and such."

In the sudden darkness I crawled on. I wanted to feel the wall, to find some border to this black world on wheels. Out there in the middle of the dusty floor I was lost.

I crawled till my hand pressed something that was warm and moist and slippery—something that moved and cried "Oh!" in a faint voice.

My father struck a match. In its brief flicker I saw. In each corner a man —coat thrown over gray white face to hide it. But the fourth, beneath my hands, coat brushed aside, grinned amiably up at me, saying:

"Yonderbound Roger an' his gay-cat. Where'd ye cop him, Yonderbound?"

"That ain't no gay-cat." My father laughed. "What you hidin' so for? Softy Shanks is skipperin' the caboose this run."

The four came out of their corners. One produced a stub of candle, for until we passed the yard limits that door must stay shut.

"Our tickets reads from St. John," said the man whose face I had touched. " 'Twas dark when the porter slung our grips aboard."

He kicked a bundle in bandanna wrappings, laughing.

"Jumped her in pitch dark—been hot—we sweated," a second cursed.

"Not knowing the eminent Admiral Shanks was with us, we lurked in the hold." This was a cultured, high-pitched voice that reminded me of a violin's E-string over taut. "That lustrous humanitarian—"

The man crawled from his corner, squatted in the middle of the floor, drew a book from his pocket and turned its tattered pages.

The others talked in whispers a language new to my ears. The train began to move and the couplings jangled so that for a moment nothing else was to be heard. I gave my ears a rest and used my eyes.

Strange men, these. Smoothface, whom I had discovered by touch in the dark, was small, rotund, good-humored, seedy, with a weak mouth. I had seen his broken like before. Such men hired out for harvesting, shaved nightly to our wonder, picked over their food, good food, daintily, grew weary for no reason and left wageless for a whim. Smoothface—I could place him. Hard work, I knew, was an infrequent interlude with him, a desperate resource.

But these others? Red-whisker, for example. Such a man I had seen but once and then but for a moment—the night Allen's ricks burned. Rising out of a ditch, dirty, swarthy in red light, running off into the woods by the river, a score of farmer folk at his heels, escaping. Such a man as this, though not this man. And it was common talk that a tramp refused a handout by Allen's wife had cursed her and him, threatening dark things. An outlaw, that. This one too, and his name Red Alick.

The long man, bearded, awkward in his movements, with burning black eyes, sincere eyes in a lean face. He, too, was a new type to me. Saying nothing yet starting to say much as if words wrestled within him and were choked back. As if he had the gift of tongues yet was loath to use it.

Last of all the man who read by candlelight. I was to know him better, weeks after this. Already those two splendid words of his—"lustrous, eminent"—book words heretofore with me—stuck in my memory like burrs. He flew them at masthead, I was to learn, these and others, like flags. He displayed them as battered touring cars displayed their pennants.

"We have been to Frisco, and Miami, a continent apart," said the pennants on the cars.

"We come from Oxford, from Yale," said the words Bookie threw at us from time to time. Echoes of culture, of learning, all the open road had left him, these.

But he displayed them bravely.

These four, wanderers all, and with them my father and myself.

The train gathered speed. *Click, click* of frog at the coal pocket. *Click, click* of points. Jangle of couplings and the last hiss of air-brakes. And now our ears caught the steady monotonous tune of travel—rail-joint meeting wheel, drone of air between car and road-bed, loose chains swaying musically and the dull rattle, rattle, rattle of the cars as they swayed along.

My father blew out the candle.

"No need of sweatin' now—forty mile to Farley and the 'dicks' " said he, and slid the door half open.

It was hot in that box car. Heat—I shall never forget it. Heat beating down from the roof, coming at us as if there were no roof at all. Heat in great waves, surging in the door as we thundered through rock cuts, seeping up from road-bed and sweating ties, resin-blistered in the ballast. Heat that made Red-whiskered Alick curse, but drew no complaints at all from Bookie, lost in his dog-eared pages. Heat that at last made the tall black-eyed man vocal, that undermined his self-restraint.

Strange words, coming slow at first, then in a cascade. Words I took for blasphemy beyond the blasphemy of Red Alick, until with a start I realized that the tall man was praying crazily.

Until I, staring at him, got the answer from Red Alick himself who stared, too, contemptuous.

"Got religion. Can you beat it?" he sneered, sliding long legs over the door sill, dangling them outside, settling himself, face to the sunlight. "Religion! Peddles it, too—him!"

And the evangelist, the tramp evangelist prayed on.

HEAT. It grew worse as the sun rode high. Now I was sitting beside Red Alick. My legs, too, dangled as I sat there between him and my father, there in the door of the Erie Box. Heat that was torture to me, with the dust of the road-bed in my throat and no farm spring at hand.

And Red Alick talked, in a hoarse croak.

"A likely gay-cat, Yonderbound. I'd buy him off'n you. What you aim to do wi' him? There's money in a baby face —" and he swung into tales unfit for me to hear, tales to which I listened all the closer on that account, though my father scowled and fidgeted.

"Two—two o' us blew into Chesleyburg—an' blew out. Hicks—all hicks—didn't think to search our boots. Walked out on found money, five grand, big bills. An' when they found him in the ditch—the fat cattle buyer—did he talk? No. Not till we was well clear. Not him. Hicks—"

And more.

"Easy money, kid," said Red Alick. "You got a cravin' for such, come with Red Alick. Rubes—banks with it stacked in tin-can safes—"

"Hold your tongue," my father rasped. "The boy ain't headed your way. Easy money's like to be hard money in the end." And for the moment Red Alick was silent, his eyes measuring my father's broad shoulders.

On and on. New country unfolding, hills bare, valleys wooded, and high above us a small cabin and a backwoods farm and a field where struggling things grew by some miracle in the rocky soil. Black against the sun a woman leaning on a hoe, shapeless and old, dressed in drab clothes, a tiny, gallant, fighting figure, though I saw but the drabness, and not the gallantry now. Turning as we passed she moved the hoe slowly, steadily, as she drove it among those pitiful growing things—and so faded from our sight.

"Easy money, not hard to come by," said Alick, and would have said more, but the man with the dark eyes, the tramp evangelist, ceased his half-mad praying and began to talk. And Alick became for the moment still.

"Woe unto ye, murderers and robbers! Woe unto ye, for the day of judgment will come! And ye have no white robe—"

"Him?" Smoothface interpreted our glances of wonder. "Bound for Pine Slash, we be. Threw him out o' Barbary for prayin' too open 'bout the mayor, him ownin' a blind pig. I'm chaperonin' him on his way. Powerful prayer, ain't he? Does a man good to hear him. Good as a church all your own. Me, I don't take stock in all he says, but he's got his uses. He sure paints hell right red. Pine Slash folks is poor trash—sort o' sentymental, too. He'll go big there, in a tent."

"What's that to you?" Red Alick growled. Smoothface winked.

"Easy money," he echoed. "Me, I passes the hat after he spouts his line."

"Got a sticker?" Alick prodded me with his elbow and showed a hacked plug of tobacco, a villainous broken clay pipe.

I fumbled in my pocket and drew forth knife and ten-dollar bill together. Red Alick must have seen. Else why did his little pig's eyes brighten and sink deeper in his ratlike face? Else why did my father frown and scowl at me until I passed the knife over and hurriedly shoved the money deeper than ever in my pocket?

Red Alick whittled his plug, filled his pipe, leaned closer to me, as we sat there in the doorway.

"Ever play cards, kid?" he asked. "Rolled into Dawson once with three grand in my jeans. Rolled out broke. Dropped into Seattle an' bucked the tiger with a panhandled buck. Had the sort o' luck that spells red eye frequent. ——, what a time I had! Money, an'—skirts, an'—well, money makes the mare go, kid, makes the mare go."

He talked on, slowly at first, nor could I guess his motive. Nor did I know that, vile though his talk was, yet did he leave worse things unsaid—that he sincerely thought himself to be recounting the more innocent pleasures of his life, that he was picking and choosing, bridling himself, seeking to charm me, overwhelm me with romance, until I might cease to see him as he was.

Trying to ingratiate himself with me, with my father whom he sensed as my guardian. And why? Because I had ten dollars which he had not but might have in the end.

Yet the thing he was at heart foiled him. Or perhaps the ten dollars wasn't worth all this effort. His little eyes seemed to shrink deeper in his face once again and as I watched, fascinated, he leaned closer, hissed in my ear:

"Look down, kid. Look down!"

I looked. Far, far below, tree-tops, tiny, swaying, beside a thread of river—and between me and them, nothing. Faint new sounds rising through the hollow roar of our train as I gazed and swayed dangerously, till my father gripped my arm.

"Highest trestle on the line," said Smoothface. "Hadn't oughter pull that on a kid, Alick. He nigh slipped over."

"Good riddance," Alick growled.

"Sound psychology," Bookie closed the dog-eared volume. "Temptation of the height. The man Jesus knew it, though you eminent gospelers have twisted the story somewhat—" and embarked on a wordy argument with the evangelist.

"Sound psychology. Big words them. Here's summat more plain!" My father, his face black with anger, twisted long gnarled fingers in Red Alick's collar, dragged him clear of the sill, shook him over space that yawned up from the bottom land. "If the boy'd fallen, you'd ha' follered" growled my father, his anger rising. He slung Red Alick back into the car, fell on him, gripped his throat.

"Would ye—would ye—Red Alick—"

He shook that evil man, strangling him until Alick lay still, moaning hoarse incoherencies, until his moaning gave place to faint gasps and the shrill whistle of a man near death.

Then my father let him go and rose, somewhat shamefaced. Nor in all this did these others interfere—Bookie and the evangelist talking mad things in a corner. Smoothface, all smiles and interest watching eagerly. It wasn't their business.

"Ye will leave this boy alone," said my father. "And, Jamie lad—"

But I, too, was angry now, and at myself. Young I was—only sixteen—but a man in growth, big and strong. Strange to their ways, I had erred. My hands, not my father's, should have been at Red Alick's throat. Well, if occasion offered—

Outside the trestle ended and once more we ran through the walls of a rock cut. Once more heat surged in. Red Alick sat up, wiped his forehead with a dirty sleeve. His little eyes gleamed bright like coals. He crawled to a corner, leaned his back against the side of the car, sat there, jaw waggling, saliva dripping from his mouth.

"I'll leave him alone. Oh ——, yes. I'll leave him alone."

I remembered a mad dog at the farm, remembered our panic-stricken rush for guns, our sudden wild shooting at a slavering, crouching target.

I had no gun now and my father was sliding the door shut, for we were coming to Farley, a divisional point and there were "dicks," perhaps, keen-eyed, in the great yards. My father was closing the door, and it was dark, and I remembered that Red Alick had not returned my knife.

Silence and darkness inside now, and heat. The half-mad evangelist and Bookie had stopped their argument. For Smoothface had silenced them.

"Talk an' be nabbed. Dicks here," he had snarled.

SILENCE and heat, and the train had stopped. I felt the air like some solid thing, so close, so warm it was. I felt sweat standing out on my forehead, though not from heat, this. Felt something else, without form, and that was fear.

Over by the door my father crouched, listening, listening as a man passed tapping wheels, as a coupling jangled, as an engine bumped us roughly toward the hump. Here they would switch us into a string destined for Montreal.

Jangling, clashing darkness—and something crawling, creeping. Unseen, this, but guessed at. Becoming, now, foul hands clutching at me, a foul hand on my throat, choking me before I could shout, there in the darkness. A bristly cheek close to mine and a whisper in my ear—

"Lie still, kid or I'll gut ye."

The knife—my knife, and Red Alick had it. Red Alick two-handed, one hand at my throat.

I could not cry out, did not want to cry out.

Here was work for my new manhood. And who would hear a whisper above the roar and rattle of the car? I did not attempt to cry out though I knew now why I had remembered that mad dog.

Red Alick, one hand at my throat, in the other my knife, his weight on me, pressing me down.

I struck with both hands. One blow straight up, finding soft face, knuckles gashing themselves on yellow teeth I struck, the other hand swinging, circling, the wrist cracking against another wrist and something falling to prick my side—my knife.

And a snarl from Red Alick, who rolled off me.

Then bodies leaping, heaving, wrestling. Smoothface, the evangelist, even Bookie. Fear driving them. Not fear of a man gone mad, but fear lest he cry out again, lest he betray us all to the dicks outside.

So they battled, silently.

My father too jumping in, guided by sound alone, dragging me clear—how he recognized me I could not guess.

And at last the door opening and bright daylight shooting in over an orderly row of heads.

In my pocket I still had that ten dollars.

Clean faces in an orderly line. Two men with hard hats, one of them smoking a blunt stub of cigar. Men in oily overalls beside them, and behind, Softy Shanks, looking very stern and brave.

"Where'n tarnation them hoboes climbed aboard I can't guess—not me," growled Softy Shanks. "I looked over that there empty box personal."

"C'mon out" barked the man with the cigar who, like his fellow railroad dick, packed a gun. "C'mon out. Where they come from don't signify. We know where they're goin'. Road buildin' an' all. Little ones outer big ones, you hoboes. Wish ye could collect more, Softy. We sure can use them."

We blinked. We untangled ourselves, all the fight gone out of us. One by one, obediently, we came. Even the evangelist was changed now and cursed, though I saw him shiver as he realized his blasphemy. Yet he had ample excuse. He knew Farley rock pile.

We climbed out—Red Alick, shambling, cringing, to be grabbed by the dick with the cigar as his personal prize. Smoothface at his heels, whom an overalled man grabbed with a howl:

"He's wearin' my shirt. Stole off'n the Missis' line a week back. Clean ruined—my shirt—" And he smote poor Smoothface across the cheek with the edge of an open hand.

Last of all, myself and my father.

"Bring Yonderbound," the dick cried. "You, Softy—that's his kid by the looks of him. The calf'll foller his pa."

And he chuckled, proud of detecting our relation as our sad little cavalcade started along between strings of box cars.

Softy Shanks had my father by the arm. He slackened his pace, looked up at my father.

"A —— of a place, our rock pile" said Softy Shanks. "I hear tell they even washes you continual there. Now oncet—" he winked—"I was leadin' an errin' brother on to doorance vile an' the dirty scut, he hit me in the stummick." He winked again.

Ahead the two dicks turned the corner of the last car, and started across tracks toward the station. One by one others rounded that corner and disappeared. Till we three were alone. My father, Softy, and myself.

"Oncet," said Softy, "oncet I was leadin' another hobo into the rock-pile lock-up an' the dang fool, havin' no sense, come with me—an' he's there yet."

"It ain't fair, hittin' a good man hard." My father stopped, "An' you so kind-hearted." Then he grabbed Softy's shirt, dragged it with one quick gesture over his head and pushed me under a near-by string of cars.

"That there's painless." My father dragged me on and on. "God sure made fat men."

We ran, leaping a ditch, climbing a fence, in our ears Softy's hoarse good-humored chuckle. Until we reached a fringe of trees that lined a brook, until Softy, stopping his laughter, bawled—

"They're murderin' me—murderin' me—"

At which, though we knew it for a lie, mere versimilitude added with an artist's touch, we but ran the harder, and came at last to a spring in the deep forest.

Here we lay, and drank, and gasped. And at last came one in a shirt all ribbons, with a broad smile. Smoothface, who complained querulously:

"That coal-heavin' fool! Ye'd think a man'd have more respect for his own shirt, wouldn't ye? Look what he done to it!"

ACROSS the hills, ten miles away, another railroad ran. Across the hills we walked, Indian file, silently.

As we came out on a summit we looked back. The railroad curved in a great arc through Farley. The town lay there, straggling along it. On the outskirts a patch of gray with wooden shacks beside it, and little ants who toiled. The rock-pile.

But ahead lay that other railroad.

We turned and sought it through the heat of afternoon.

The Irresistible

By

ROBERT EMERICK

ON A bench against the hacienda wall, old Pedro Delgado sat in the sun. His faded eyes, inscrutable and calm, stared at some object far in the distance. His dark face with its bristly mustache was immobile and without expression; his lean old hands, very brown and traversed by large veins that appeared blackish by contrast, rested lifeless on his knees. He appeared immutable, age-old, profound, like the vast and barren slopes of the surrounding mountains.

To the young man in the white uniform of an American naval officer, studying him from the dusty back of a very tired horse, there came a feeling of something uncanny and strange, the feeling that in this old Peruvian he was seeing the materialization of forces lethal and barbarous, underlying influences that received full consideration from all life in the district. It was a momentary glimpse of the anxiety, the tragedy, that hovers over life where the arm of the law is short and weak.

Under different conditions the American would have given him little attention. A single nod of greeting, perhaps a wave of the hand, and the old man with the faded eyes would have been left behind forever, veiled in an aura of pale dust. But this time the man from North America was lost, tired and parched with thirst. He had to stop even though he believed himself unwelcome.

"*Señor,*" he began in his limited and untrustworthy Spanish, "*donde Lurin?*"

One of the lifeless brown hands, presenting an unexpected and vigorous animation, swung across the deserted hills and held steady when approximately at right angles to the westering sun.

"That way," Pedro Delgado replied in clear English, "two hours distant on a tired horse. I'd suggest you rest here a little while."

The American was vastly surprized and at the same time much relieved.

"Thank Heaven," he sighed, "that you are able to speak English. My Spanish is either deformed or missing. That's why I'm here. This horse of mine comes

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"The Irresistible," copyright, 1927, by Robert Emerick.

from Lurin. I borrowed him to ride out to Pachacamac along with a couple of friends and when we got there, he broke through part way into either a grave or an underground room. The shock was too much for him and he let loose with all he had. Ever since I've been trying to think up the Spanish word for 'whoa' which he didn't seem to understand in the slightest. As it is, we are both much in need of water, and if you can spare some, I can confidently say we will both be very grateful."

"Get down," the old man said in his calm voice. "There is plenty for both—Dolores— That's right, sit on the bench, señor. Dolores!"

A very old woman emerged from the hacienda door. She was quite stout, and her shoulders were round and bent forward, as if a lifetime of unrelieved labor had conformed them so to best meet their burden. Her small dark eyes, peering from a tired and wrinkled face, rested on the old man with an anxious and questioning expression. Her fat and wrinkled hands, hanging at full arm's length in front of her, locked and unlocked alternately.

Thus she stood—old, anxious, silent, awaiting his words; and all the while he never once moved his head in her direction nor turned his faded eyes from their contemplation of the bare and lonely mountains.

Finally he said in his native Spanish:

"Bring water, Dolores, for our guest and his horse. Later, perhaps, some food. He will rest here a while."

The old woman returned immediately into the house, disappearing with the abruptness of a mechanical cuckoo popping back into its clock. A moment later he said to the American:

"While you are here, señor, consider my home yours. I regret most deeply that I can not at this moment conduct you into it and welcome you to our hospitality in the way that is my desire. Manuel is gone, and Juan and Antonio, gone three days ago. There is no one even to work in the fields. Only old Dolores is left, and she would not leave, even before the face of death. But then what is life after all when all you love is taken away?"

OLD Dolores reappeared with the water, and the American satisfied his tired horse and then himself, expressing his gratitude meanwhile in his crude and stumbling Spanish.

"They came here three days ago," Pedro Delgado continued in his quiet monotone, "Pablo Malache and his three men, the bandits of Lurin. It was early in the afternoon and they expected to find me in the house as is usual in the siesta. But that day I had fallen asleep out in the fields under a tree. They hunted for me everywhere, Pablo and his men, and threatened to kill the women who knew, so they thought, where I was. Then they searched the house for my black-and-pearl treasure-box, smashing furniture, pounding walls, tearing down pictures and tapestries.

"But they could not find it, señor, that Pablo and his men. So they took instead my daughter and her daughter, dragging them screaming and fighting up on to their horses, and carried them away for ransom, for the black-and-pearl box that they could not find. Only old Dolores was left behind to deliver the message; old Dolores the servant-girl, lying on the floor and with bindings of rope from her head to her feet, and a broken kitchen knife in the corner that she had tried to drive into Pablo's neck. They fought with a great fury, those women, while I—I whom men used to call 'the Irresistible'—slept quietly in the field!"

"Too bad, but it wasn't your fault," the American said with a real sympathy for the grim old man. "You can't be conscious of things like that when you're asleep."

"When I heard of it from Dolores I would have followed with the black-and-pearl box under my arm, for my wealth and my old life together can not equal in value the safety of my children. Only they had a long start, señor, and I do not know even the direction they took. Pablo hides in the mountains and the mountains are wild and trackless, for the sand drifts before the wind and the scars left by a horse's feet are healed within an hour.

"I wept then, señor, with grief over my daughter and her daughter and with shame that I had slept in the fields while they were being carried away.

"Finally old Dolores said, 'We must bring them back, somehow,' and the words brought me my senses. I called in the men from the field, Manuel, Juan, Antonio, and I told them of my grief, and sent them to Lurin with instructions to tell all they met that I would wait alone for Pablo's return and exchange the black-and-pearl box for my children. I knew that Pablo would soon receive that information, for all of Lurin is afraid of him and half of Lurin serves him for his favor.

"And I was right, señor. Yesterday morning Pablo returned, Pablo and two others, which left one man to guard their prisoners. They came from three directions at once so that I would not be shown the true source of their journey. I was sitting here on the bench waiting for them, and Pablo, who came up from the right over the first hill on the Lurin road, stopped almost directly in front of me, just as you yourself did, señor, not very long ago. He is only a medium-sized man, this Pablo, but he has a very fierce black mustache and a boastful manner that never fail to impress and frighten the poor in Lurin.

"He put his hands on his hips, and said with a great show of contempt, 'So—we know at last the tiger-cat is cowardly at heart! Did we come too suddenly for you to run out in the fields and hide?'

"I would have killed him for that, señor, only I feared for my children. I reached under the bench and picked up my black-and-pearl box and placed it across my knees. At the sight Pablo's eyes almost came out of his head, and his big brown hands began to shake. He got down off his horse and came over to me but I reached out a hand and held him back. 'I must have back my children,' I said. 'You shall have them and welcome,' he said. 'They are two she-devils. Now give me the box.'

"So I handed him the box and Pablo and his men bumped their heads in their eagerness to open it and see inside. And when they got the lid open at last, and the morning sun showed them my treasure, they were very angry. For the box was not much more than half full.

" 'Give me the rest of it, you old weasel,' said Pablo, and thrust his big pistol against my chest. 'And if you don't hurry I'll blow out your lying heart!' I thought for a moment, señor, that my last hour had come.

" 'You shall have the rest when you return my children,' I said, as calmly as I could. 'Half now, Pablo, and the other half when you complete your part of the bargain. That is my custom, and I'll go to Heaven before I change it.'

" '*Nombre de Dios!*' said Pablo, 'you try to bargain with one foot already in Paradise! Ignacio, what shall we do?' 'If we kill him,' Ignacio replied, 'we will have only what is now in the box. Let us bring back his she-devils and get the other half.'

" 'Very well,' said Pablo and took away his pistol. 'We will come back tomorrow. But mind you, Pedro, there will be no further talk of bargains. We shall have the other half at once or we'll start your soul straightway to ——!'

"They rode away then, señor, separating to go in three directions, as they had come. That was yesterday, and I have been waiting here for their return, sitting all day against the wall and watching for my children to come out of the hills."

And he looked as though he had always sat there, from the beginning of the mountains like a mortal personification of their spirit—grim, immutable, infinitely lonely.

"You were very courageous," said the American, gazing with a curious wonder at the swarthy stoical profile. "Few men at the mercy of such bandits would have been able to make them go away with only half the money they expected."

"I had to, señor," was the calm reply. "For you see the money and jewelry that Pablo saw in my black-and-pearl box is the total sum of my wealth. There is no other half."

"I THINK some one is coming," said the old man in his even expressionless tones. "Can you see, señor? No, not on the road; out there where that low hill seems so white in the sunlight. See, just where the light meets the shadow of the valley behind it."

The American, with hand-shaded eyes, stared long and intently at the distant hill that shone not too clearly through a hot and yellowish haze.

"I can't see anything," he announced finally. "At least nothing moving."

"Perhaps you are right," said Pedro Delgado. "My eyes are old, and eagerness always whips up the imagination."

"But what will you do about the money?," the American asked. "Pablo will kill you! Give me a pistol, and between us we'll make him wish he hadn't come. At worst there would be only four to two."

The old man shook his head.

"There will be women with him, señor. Their safety must come before anything else. Besides—I am not so certain of my death.

"In my youth," he continued, "I was sent to England, to learn with the British Army the art of war. I learned it well, for I discovered a natural aptitude for the military. Since then, in my own country, I have led two revolutions and named two presidents. Not once has victory ever left me for the enemy. Men named me *El Irresistible*. Even now, although I have retired from the Army, there are some who are still afraid of the power of *El Irresistible*. This hacienda belongs to the government, but I am to live here for the rest of my life, and enjoy a moderate pension provided I do not meddle in their politics. So you see they are not so sure that age has clipped my claws, though Pablo seems to have no fear.

"But I will tell you this, my friend. This blazing sun is warming one of us, Pablo or me, for the last time. Before it sets *El Irresistible* or the bandit of Lurin will be crumbling into dust, and the first star tonight will find a new era beginning in the valley."

A rustling sound came from the doorway. Dolores emerged, her fat old body rocking from side to side under the stress of an extraordinary haste. She halted immediately in front of the old man and addressed him in a low-pitched excited voice, her words being emphasized by the sharp movements of her brown hands and the intense light that the importance of her message had kindled in her dark eyes. There was about her too a suggestion of defiance, as if she expected some sort of objection from her listener and was determined to meet it with an overwhelming determination. It was a startling exhibition of spirit in one so old, and being a witness to it the American could understand the recklessness of the courage that had led her to attack the bandit chief with a kitchen knife.

The old man listened to it all very calmly, nodded his head at the finish to indicate his complete comprehension, and answered with a single brief sentence that was at once final and assured. Dolores seemed undecided for a moment, then turned and hurried back into the house, but the wrinkles around her mouth had deepened into an indication of a frank disapproval.

"Pablo is coming," the old man said in his quiet way. "Dolores has been watching from an upper window. They came out of the mountains around the white hill—where I did after all see some one move—and separated, two going to the left and two toward the right. And my children are with the two that turned to the left.

"Dolores wanted a revolver to conceal in her dress. She could use it, she said, to help Pablo into Paradise. I told her to bring out my solid silver candelabrum. It is set with jewels and is now my most valuable possession. It will look very brilliant in the sunlight and may perhaps catch Pablo's fancy."

Dolores emerged once more from the doorway, moving much slower this time and hugging in her arms the hard burden of the great candelabrum. She set it on the ground close to the end of the bench and then turned to walk away, very sullenly, without a word.

Pedro Delgado did not so much as look at his candelabrum. He had returned to some profound meditation, and his dark profile with the eyes set straight ahead was graven in its immobility .

The American too, had nothing to say. He strained his eyes, staring into the sun haze, turned his head alternately left and right to scrutinize the vista of barren earth that remained utterly lifeless to his gaze. To his mind old Pedro had little chance for life and he awaited Pablo's appearance with the tense expectancy that one might feel toward a visit from death.

After a long while, the old man said, with a momentary turn of the head:

"They are coming now. Over the hill from Lurin."

There were two horsemen riding abreast and moving at a fast trot. The whitish dust leaped up from the beating hoofs and billowed out behind them in a pale diaphanous cloud.

"Señor, I must ask you to do me a favor," the old man said, speaking rapidly in a low voice. "When Pablo arrives, will you watch Dolores and restrain her from any move against him? I have kept the pistol from her but she might find a knife or even a skewer and attempt to use it and I am certain that Pablo would kill her at once this time—perhaps both of us. Will you do that my friend?"

"I'll hold her," the American promised grimly. "There will be no murders started in that way if I can help it!"

The horsemen approached rapidly. They were riding easily and gracefully and the rhythmic motion of their bodies seemed to keep time with the round and drumlike cadence of the flying hoofs beneath. They halted abruptly before the hacienda door and, remaining in their saddles, gazed down silently on the two who were sitting on the bench. Each rider wore a soft gray shirt, open at the throat, a dark-colored unbuttoned vest and a downcast dark felt hat. Fine boots equipped with spurs projected from the bottoms of very wide soiled trousers, and a loaded cartridge belt and pistol holster was strapped about each waist.

In build and dress they were much alike; but the one was clean-shaven, rather indifferent in facial character, while the other possessed a big black mustache—a mustache that had somehow a sinister appearance—and eyes that smoldered brutishly in a dark thick face.

The man with the sinister mustache waved a heavy arm toward the American and asked with a scowl:

"Who is that, Pedro? If this is a trick I'll kill you both."

"He's a sailor, Pablo. From the *Escuadra Americana* at Callao and he became lost in the hills. And you know as well as I that it is no trick. You set a man to watch me and that man saw him come."

The old man spoke very calmly. His words were so measured and distinct that the American, even with his rudimentary knowledge of Spanish, was able to catch their meaning.

The bandit chieftain nodded his head and his scowl lightened.

"You speak truthfully, old man. Pablo is not tricked so easily. Now where is the rest of the ransom?"

"You shall have more than you expected," Pedro Delgado replied, his dark face deeply earnest, "when you bring back my children."

Pablo laughed—a nasty, sneering laugh.

"There they are, señor," he said with a mocking bow of politeness, and waved his hand in the direction opposite to that from which he had come. "I present to you Señora Valentina and Señorita Felicita. And I wish you joy of them. They are tiger-cats, no less."

The two remaining members of Pablo's band had appeared abruptly over the top of a hillock less than two hundred yards away. Riding on each horse and seated ahead of the man, so that he could watch and guard against her teeth and fingernails, was a woman. The horses were moving slowly, as if weary beneath their double load.

At the sight the old man leaped to his feet. His lips trembled. His dark eyes became profoundly gentle and perhaps a trifle moist. During those few moments while he watched with intense eagerness their dull approach, he lived in a world inhabited only by himself, his daughter and her daughter. Pablo had ceased to exist, together with the American, the mountains, the drifting sand, the blazing sun, even the fundamental realities of life and death.

They saw him then, those women, a hundred yards away, and waved with slim white hands held high above the horses' nodding heads and spread fingers shaking hysterically in the vigor of their emotion. For a single moment the old man remained utterly motionless. Then he raised his own right arm upward and outward until it was fully extended above his head, and there it remained for many seconds, an eloquent gesture of welcome, love and boundless thanksgiving.

The horses stopped. The men swung off to the ground and readjusted the rifles slung across their backs. The two women dismounted almost as quickly, ignoring the help of hands the bandits extended to them. Then they fairly flew across the few yards still separating them from the old man and threw themselves upon him and with one dark head resting on each shoulder, wept and laughed alternately while he held them tightly within his arms and whispered comfort to them, as one might to very small and upset children. After a while they raised their heads and Pedro Delgado held them off at arm's length and surveyed them critically and anxiously for any signs of mistreatment. They smiled at him with tear-stained faces, and Valentina his daughter with a little thrill of triumph said:

"We are unharmed, *padre*. It is the bandits who bear the marks. Have you seen Julio's face and Ignacio's arms?"

Then old Dolores came up, breathless with excitement and haste. She dropped to her knees before them and clung to their hands while she gasped some indistinguishable message and the tears drew crooked trails across her wrinkled cheeks.

Pablo, who had been looking on with silent cynicism, finally became impatient.

"Pedro!" he called sharply. "Enough of that. You have your women, now where is my other half of the ransom?"

The old man swung around sharply as if startled and his black eyebrows knit with the effort to recall his thoughts to the exigency created by the bandit. With returning comprehension he said to the women:

"Valentina, Felicita, Dolores! Go inside. Prepare food, and remember that we shall have a guest with us."

Being of a land in which women are allowed only slight initiative, they obeyed at once without question and regardless of their own desires. Then Pedro walked over to the bench and picked up the great candelabrum. It was a magnificent piece of solid silver, easily two feet in height and set with a score of small jewels. Five candles were borne by it arranged in a line. Four of them were of pure white wax and moderate in size, but the fifth candle, which occupied the middle position, was of larger dimensions and its white surface was almost obscured by a network of esoteric inscriptions and designs seemingly inlaid in gold.

Under the interested gaze of the four bandits Pedro held it high in the air so that the departing sun was reflected in countless flashes from its bright facets.

"Your reward is here, Pablo," he declared dramatically, "in this candelabrum. In it I am giving to you the greatest treasure obtainable on this earth!"

Pablo's coarse face darkened. A hard glitter awakened in his eyes. The others looked doubtfully from one to another.

"Very pretty, Pedro," the bandit said, "but it's not enough. The jewels are small, and the silver when melted would not be worth one-tenth of what you gave us before. You must find more for us or by the Virgin, Pedro, your soul will be in Purgatory before sunset!"

And he moved his right hand to the butt of the pistol resting in its holster.

"You speak too hastily, Pablo," the old man replied quietly, and looked the bandit chieftain straight in the eye. "True, the candelabrum is only so much silver and the jewels are small in size, but the middle candle with its inlay of gold, is beyond the understanding of you, or me, or any other person in this part of the world. I brought it from the Far East where it belonged to the priests of a mountain temple, and its flame when lighted in the sunset will turn to pure gold any metal that it heats. Do you see now, why I am giving you the greatest treasure in our world?"

"You lie, Pedro!" Pablo drew out his pistol and leveled it. "I went to school in Lima in my youth, and I know there is no truth in alchemy. However, we will try out your candle—after you are dead."

The old man drew himself fully erect and faced the pistol with a smile.

"Then you will lose, Pablo, because you can not read the inscriptions on the candle, and as a dead man I can not translate them for you. If you wish to throw away immense wealth for yourself and your men that is your choice. As for me, I am an old man and ready to go."

Pablo hesitated with his finger on the trigger and his three men looked deeply alarmed.

"Make him show us first, Pablo," Ignacio whispered tensely. "We can easily kill him if he's lying. And how are you so sure that he is anyway? There is much in the East we know nothing about. Let's take no chances."

Grinning evilly, Pablo returned his pistol to its holster.

"My men, having no education, are afraid you tell the truth," he said disdainfully. "Before they will agree to kill you, therefore, I must prove to them that you lie. So you shall turn—let's see—Julio's rifle barrel into gold. And if you fail, you know the result for you."

The old man nodded with an acquiescent but indifferent manner.

"Come," he said, "we must go up on the hillock over which you brought my children. The sun is close to setting and we must have the full yellow of its light."

"The Americano will come too," Pablo ordered. "Left here, he might shoot us in the back. Who can tell what tricks you've planned, old weasel."

With Pedro and the American walking together, and the four bandits of Lurin spread out abreast behind them, the whole party started for the hillock. It required but a few minutes to traverse the intervening distance, and there, on the summit of the tiny eminence, the old man placed the candelabrum in the full warmth and splendor of the sunset, while the horsemen dismounted and gathered around him.

"Your rifle, Julio," he asked and held out his hand for it.

"No you don't, Pedro," Pablo snapped. "Did you think we would give up our arms so easily? Julio will hold the gun in the flame, not you!"

"Fool!" the old man retorted with open contempt, while Pablo's fingers fondled his pistol at the slur. "I shall show you the treasures of heaven beyond any question of trickery! Julio, kneel upon the ground. That's right, with your rifle to your shoulder, as if you were shooting at a target. Now we move the candelabrum until the golden candle is directly under the barrel.

"Pablo, I am going to pace off one hundred yards. There I will stand and Julio, with the barrel of his rifle in the flame, will keep the muzzle trained on my heart. The Americano will stand beside me to prove that *he* intends no trickery. While the metal in the gun is warming I will be repeating the words inscribed on the candle. If no gold appears within five minutes after lighting the candle you, Pablo, will give Julio the word to shoot. Could any test be more fair?"

Pablo frowned in indecision.

"Why do you go so far?" he questioned suspiciously. "Kneel here with your heart to the muzzle of the gun. Ignacio can watch the Americano."

"The inscription must be spoken aloud," Pedro Delgado said evenly, "and if I were nearer you would hear the words. After I satisfy you that the gun will turn to gold I intend to give you the inscription in exchange for my life. Can not Julio hit a target so far away?"

"I can kill at twice that distance," Julio boasted. "Let him go, Pablo."

"The sun has almost set, too, Pablo," Ignacio put in anxiously. "See, already the valleys are becoming dark and in a little while it will be too late. Let him go and quickly, for by the Virgin I want gold in my pocket tonight!"

"Very well then, they shall go—both of them!" Pablo stormed in a rage. "And if Pedro fails, they'll be together in Purgatory this night! *Madre de Dios*, I swear it! Alberto, give me your rifle."

"When I raise my arm, Pablo, you will light the candle," Pedro Delgado instructed him in a calm voice and turned away.

"Come, señor," he said to the American in his slow quiet English. "We will go to a safe distance while Pablo and his men discover the gold of heaven."

Together they walked away, moving across the rough and barren earth with unhurried and measured steps while the shadows spread in the valley and the sunset filled the sky.

"I don't understand this," said the American uneasily. "What do *we* do when those fellows begin to shoot?"

"They will never shoot," said the old man in a fateful tone. "The flame of the golden candle will change no iron to gold, but for the bandits of Lurin it's a summons into Paradise. I made that candle myself, señor. Its wick is a fuse and its heart a stick of dynamite. Ah, here we are at the appointed distance."

They stopped and faced back to the hillock, all yellow in the splendor of the sunset, with the black figures of the bandits hovering in tense and eager postures over the shining candelabrum.

Pedro Delgado raised his arm and on the hillock there appeared a small pale flame as a lighted match was touched to the wick of the golden candle.

"May their souls find peace!" said the old man softly and reverently. "My friend, let us close our eyes."

Miracles

DAWN in Leeston. Leeston sleeping. The lights in the jail and sheriff's house next door are fading. Main Street is silent and the porticoes in front of the business stores are empty.

Silence is breaking, giving to the dull tread of a black man swinging into town at five corners; white-eyed black, barefoot, mouth open to get wind, half running across the road to the court-house yard and pausing under an elm to pant and gaze at the frame cottage next to the court-house and jail.

He's pacing under the elms as if he wants to be seen; he's hesitating at the grim old cannon saved by Leeston from Revolutionary days. From the cannon by the side of the road entering the sheriff's stable to the elm in the middle of the court-house yard is the parade ground of a lone black trying to be seen but afraid to arouse the law. Afraid to disturb Leeston, sleeping Leeston with its edict against blacks.

From elm to cannon. Cannon to elm. Pantings. Thin rustle of bare feet through the high grass; silky sliding of feet. Eyes glued to the home of the law. Hoping eyes jerking at every flicker of the low yellow flame in the kitchen of the law.

Down the street a figure emerges from the doorway leading to the rooms over the drug store. Marshal Steve Dodie yawns, gives a hitch to his pants and shuffles across the street to the portico of the general store. He leans against a post, fills his mouth with scrap tobacco. For a minute he gazes abstractedly across at the windows of his rooms. Then his eyes sweep the town—slow turning of his head, mechanical sizing up of buildings—daily inspection, always from the same post under the porticoes, while he waits for Old Man Steele to unbolt and open his door.

The marshal's eyes widen and his lips compress as he sees the black man pacing under the elms; the marshal's fingers twitch. Restless, parading nigger makes the marshal frown. Signs of black madness under the elms—must be mad to enter a town from which niggers are barred. Loco nigger in shrunken jean pants and barefoot has his nerve to parade openly at dawn, defying the law.

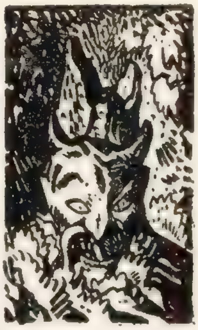
Five hundred feet from the general store to the court-house yard. Marshal Dodie crosses the street again to the drug store, hugs its walls until he reaches the first elm. From elm to elm now he advances up the heavily shaded yard, transferring his gun from his hip holster to the pocket of his coat. Short-barreled Colt covering the black who keeps up his pacing, cannon to elm, elm to cannon. Keeps up his gazing at the sheriff's windows, at the faded yellow flame in the kitchen of the county's law.

Pacing from the cannon to the elm, the black man looks back over his shoulder. He doesn't see the marshal yet; he's unconscious of the quick yet stealthy creeping from tree to tree while his back is turned in his tramp from the elm to the

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By

FISWOODE TARLETON



cannon. He falls back as if from a blow, stands paralyzed, white-eyed. Look of hate—old, threatening hate that cleaned Leeston of his race cows him, makes him retreat stiffly. Hoarse whispers come from the black's mouth:

"Gawd, what us seen, Marse Steve! Lawd, de faces!"

Marshal Dodie's mouth goes crooked, smiles without opening. His eyes fasten on the black man's red calico shirt, his face grows stern. Near the black's belt the point of a knife has cut its way through the shirt cloth; low down in the black's bosom nestles fourteen inches of steel. Mad nigger at dawn. Deserted street. He's ten feet away from the black man, but the marshal increases it to fifteen.

"Take 'at knife out o' yore shirt an' drop hit. An' drop hit quick! Jes' take yore shirt out o' yore pants and let hit fall. Hustle!"

The black man pulls up his shirt from the neck, as if trying to take it off. He sees the outline of the muzzle of the revolver in the marshal's pocket, sees the top of the marshal's thumb protruding from his pocket, thumb holding the hammer of the gun back ready to release. So the black's hands stay high; they shoot upward as the knife falls. When he backs at the order of the marshal he keeps his hands up.

While the black stands twenty feet away, his back to the cannon, the town officer picks up the knife, feels its sharp edge and point. Dropping it into his left-hand pocket, he steps over to the court-house stoop and sits down. He beckons to the black to come closer.

"Whar yuh from, nigger, an' why yuh a-paradin' roun' hyar afore sun-up?"

Seems as if the black's eager to talk, jumps at the chance. He says he's from the creek bottoms beyond Porky Ridge and that he works at the logging camp on the slope of Nightcap Mountain. Says that the logging camp boss sent him for the sheriff. Little Congo, the black settlement bordering the creek and crowding to the edge of the swamp is upset. Men won't work and women are rocking and moaning in front of their cabin doors. Faces are on the roads. Faces of Jesus in the clay. Miracles worked overnight on all the roads and paths crossing the creek. Faces in the swamp. Likeness of Jesus looking up out of black earth. Powerful voodoo. Maybe signs of Judgment Day.

"Huh!" Marshall Dodie turns his head, hunting the object of the black man's quick, darting eyes. A large form passes between the window of the sheriff's house and the faded yellow lamp-flame. The faded yellow flame is blown out and the county officer comes to the window. Looks out. Sees the black man beckoning frantically, motioning with his arms for the sheriff to come out.

"Who war yuh aimin' tuh carve up with 'at knife?"

"Wasn't gwine kill nobody, Marse Steve. Was gwine to cut de faces. Take 'em off de road. Logging boss he say niggers don' work 'kase o' faces in de clay. Ah don' cut 'em, though, Marse Steve—Ah don't hack at de face of Jesus. Ah don' do nothin' but run heah for Marse Floyd."

The marshal throws a look at the sheriff's house again, then rises. Keeping five feet away from the black, he makes him climb the steps and open the court-house door. The marshal knows that since he drove all the blacks out of town to the hills and swamps and made Leeston one hundred per cent. white, that some of the blacks hold a deep grudge. He's afraid the black's wild talk about faces is a ruse—another knife hidden away in the black's old rags. Niggers are quick with a knife. Some are quick to grab at a throat. So the town officer forces the black man through the door of the court-house and jail, makes him move along at the point of his gun to the first cell across from the sheriff's office and locks him up.

While the prisoner mumbles about faces and asks to talk to Sheriff Floyd Jett the marshal seats himself in the office chair and looks out the window. Nabbed a madman just in time, he's thinking. Pious nigger gone loco; bent on murder at dawn. Stalking like a black catamount under the elms, waiting for the sheriff. Nigger's knife buried up to the hilt in Floyd Jett's back if the marshal hadn't been on the job. Killer whispering about Jesus. Faces in the road. Funny black dreams. A nigger can't even go crazy like a white man. Always some hellish superstition about the devil or a belief that they've talked with Jesus. Huh! Sneaking into town at dawn to parade on the court-house yard!

Looking out the window and down Main Street, the marshal sees Old Man Steele open his door at last and bring out brooms and boxes of vegetables to lay out under the portico A mountain man rides up on a sway-back horse, dangles his legs and talks to the keeper of the general store.

Whines come from the cell across the hall. High-pitched words whining about clay. Then, as footsteps sound in the hall, the same voice calls—

"Marse Floyd!"

Footfalls and the long faint shadow of the sheriff bring Marshal Dodie out of the office. He frowns as he sees the county officer pause before the bars and listen to black superstitions, black ravings. Listening intently, humoring a lunatic, even nodding at him. Once more the sheriff's taking a loco nigger seriously. Wait until he hears about the black man stalking at dawn with a fourteen-inch knife. Let him go on listening a little longer, get his ear full of crazy palaver. Let him keep on looking with soft eyes at the black man and think he's working out another one of his humanity theories.

"Faces," the sheriff repeats, throwing a glance at the marshal, "funny about the faces!"

When he looks back at the prisoner he questions him in soft tones, asks him where he's from.

"Creek nigger. Li'l Congo."

The marshal says it as he comes nearer the cage. The marshal winks and laughs—expressions that mean a lot.

"Little Congo!" the sheriff repeats and the whines of the black and the sharp laughs of the marshal fail to disturb the county officer's reverie. Reverie that brings this odd black settlement before the sheriff's mind's eye. Rhythmic, pulsating nights, the sheriff sitting on a ledge near the heights of Nightcap Mountain. Throbbing nights, lifting up from the creek bottoms melody soft and primitive. Patting and rubbing of drums. Hummings that lay over him, covering him like a soft texture. Deep between hinterlands where blacks have preserved customs since long before slavery days, where fires of superstition have never died. And now, faces. This time in the roads and swamps.

"——!" exclaims the marshal, jerking the sheriff's coat sleeve and holding out the knife, point first, so the county officer sees the gleam, the sharp point and edges. "That's yore face!"

"Marse Floyd! Gawd heah me! I come to fetch yo'. Niggers gwine mad. Won' work. Faces in de road! Jesus in de clay!"

"Jesus! Shore Jesus! Listen."

The marshal holds the knife out of the sheriff's shadow, flicks the sharpened edge with his forefinger. With an oath he silences the black man and tells the sheriff about the black stalking at dawn and watching the windows of his, the sheriff's, house. The marshal tells about the parading of the black from cannon to elm and elm to cannon; defying laws and waiting to knife. Tells how he got out of bed in the nick of time and covered the black man, how he probably saved the sheriff's life.

"Lawd heah me, Marse Floyd! Gawd, he know—"

"Shet up, yuh black ——!"

Turning to the sheriff, the marshal talks about taking the black man to the Anathoth asylum. About hog-tying him and taking him to the asylum while there's time, before he gets too wild; before he runs amuck; before he thinks he was told to murder whites by the face of Jesus on the road.

The marshal's voice is like an inaudible buzz to the sheriff. The county officer is thinking. Primitive superstitions resulting in madness, maybe. Delusions born of religious fervor, perhaps. Odd though. Strange. Faces on the roads! Images in clay! New one even to Floyd Jett who's lived a life among primitive whites and blacks, whose diary is chock full of strange episodes—strange because they're true. Weird Appalachian dramas in embryo. But this one! This likeness of the Christ. Maybe voodoo. Black magic. Or nigger imagination. Yet it calls; it thrills!

"Where're these faces, boy?"

"Leeston road. Near crick. Some in de swamp, Marse Floyd."

"Mean in the clay? Mean the faces are drawn in the clay?"

"De faces dey rise in de clay. Dey stand up. Mouf, nose, chin come up. Dey don' been scratched; don' been drawed. Jes' seem to rise, like he's a-comin' out de clay, de Lawd Jesus."

"Huh!" Sheriff Jett takes the knife from the marshal, whets it slowly, absently, on his palm. "What you doing with this, boy?"

"Marse Carl, de loggin' camp boss, gimme de knife. Yo' see de niggers ain't gwine work. Dey jes' sing an' stay home. Boss, he say, 'Cut out de faces, dig 'em up, den niggers come to work.' I's Marse Carl's cook—dat's why he collar me. But Ah cain't cut de faces. Jes' cain't. Ah ain't gwine slash at God Jesus."

Marshal Dodie snickers, then looks into the cell next to the black man's. A hillman is rising from a cot. Moonshine prisoner stepping close up to the bars to look out and listen. To the marshal comes a thought. Primary election next fall. Sheriff and marshal both up for the legislature. Strong hill vote counts. Here's something to offset the advantage of Floyd Jett. Political move possible that all hillmen will understand. A black eye for the sheriff if the marshal's smooth. Incapacity. Gullible sheriff taking a mad black seriously. Falling for a hoax. The marshal glances at the hill prisoner and winks.

"——, Floyd, why yuh wastin' time. Bes' way's tuh git him tuh Anathoth. Hit's co't day an' we-uns air a-goin' tuh be busy."

The hill prisoner grins at the marshal, who winks again.

Sheriff Jett doesn't notice. He's feeling his chin and looking absently down the long hall, past the stairway leading to the court-room above. Pretty soon he turns and walks to the door, looks up and down the street. He steps off the stoop and walks around the corner of the court-house to his stable. His white horse whinnies and paws the floor of the stall as the sheriff throws on saddle and bridle; he snorts as the sheriff mounts and spurs him outside the stable door.

Turning out on the Leeston road, the sheriff checks his horse to a slow canter. Old panorama on either side of the road as he rides, yet freshening to the eye; old scenes that seem new at the particular hour. On his left the steep slopes of hills, on his right valley pastures. All his senses are touched—whiffs of burning chestnut-wood, the wavering bays of a tired hound, cows far off that are as still as wooden toys.

At the beginning of a rise he pulls his horse to a walk. Long steady climb ahead. His eyes fasten on the deep hoof holes and the wagon ruts in the red clay. Strange about the faces. The sheriff knows the hinterlands as few men do. Knows that where strange things are not expected they happen. Knows what isolation does to men, what it leads men to do. This face, now! Maybe a delusion, an hallucination of the black man locked up in jail. Niggers on fire with religion see unheard of things. Maybe he, the sheriff, *is* falling for a hoax. If so Marshal Dodie will make the most of it.

Sheriff Jett thinks of the legislature, of reforms—betterments he'd like to bring to mountain folks and legislation that is needed but which has never been put through. He knows that his humanitarian ideas sometimes work against him. Strong politics being played by his opponent, the marshal. Sinister, exaggerated talk about the sheriff loving niggers for instance. The marshal's always rehashing stuff about the sheriff.

There's the time when the county officer spent almost a whole day at the cabin of "Auntie" Kate Shakespere listening to her tell about the "little people." Hill folks wouldn't have anything to do with this woman, avoided her as one bereft of reason and sense. Folks chided her from the road. County judges tried their best to put her away in Anathoth. The sheriff fought tooth and nail for her.

The little people she lived with in her mind kept her happy; kept her interested doing strange things. She told the sheriff about taking walks in the field with them, in the early spring before the hay-grass got high—that was because their heads reaching only as high as her knee, the little people might get lost. She had made cradles for them and stood them about the room. Her friends were undersized, she said, because they stepped out of a book she was reading one day. They were melancholy because nobody but Auntie Kate recognized them. They were jealous, too, of books. Their guardian thought they dreaded the issuing of strange peoples from the pages.

Well, after a while didn't he, Floyd Jett, think these little people were real? When Auntie Kate trudged to Leeston monthly, for provisions, spoke to the little people on Main Street or in the general store, he would listen, would talk about the knee-high family of hers, while other folks in the store smiled and poked fun.

The story of the little people was as long as a book, as she told it the day the sheriff spent on her cabin stoop. The story out of which the strange people stepped was of course in print somewhere, but not the little dramas acted later in Auntie Kate's cabin. What they did was jotted down in the sheriff's diary. Some one had, sometime, looked and read, had found his diary on his desk and was curious. It wasn't the beginning of a reputation for queerness but a reason for its spreading. He, Floyd Jett, was considered odd after he became sheriff. Well, he *is* odd.

Somehow the legislature seems suddenly to be farther away. Jett seems odd to himself. Feels odd as sheriff even though his courage and strong arm keep order as none of his predecessors had; even though hillmen and town folks trusted him.

Reveries continue. Panorama of green meadows. Then a call from a barefoot mountain boy backing under a pasture fence. They wave at each other. The sheriff watches a feather of smoke rise from a cabin beyond the pasture; sees a woman come to the door, hands on her hips, pipe in her mouth. She too waves.

The road grows steeper and begins to twist and turn. After a while it settles straight for two miles ahead 'til it reaches Porky Ridge. The pastures end now on his right. Hills on both sides of the road. Pretty soon he hears a hound baying high up in the laurel—fresh hound with strong steady voice. A shot rings out. Mountain man must have got his breakfast—rabbit breakfast, pone, chicory coffee.

When the county officer reaches the crest of the road and enters the narrow ravine between Misery and Cone Mountains he stops his horse suddenly. A hundred yards ahead he sees a hillman, unsteady on his legs and throwing glances here and there on the clay road. The hillman carries a stick and pokes the hoof holes and ruts. Walks a few feet, then turns quickly to examine a spot in the clay. He gives a start at every sound in the laurel scrub by the road. The sheriff knows the hillman. Andy Calkin seeing liquor snakes again. Huh! Another moonshine drunk lasting weeks. One of the few montaineers who drink their own stuff to the D. T. stage. Three months back the sheriff had to take him to the Anathoth asylum, raving mad from drink. Seeing butterflies with boots on, hog-tied in the sheriff's spring wagon.

Sheriff Jett knows the hillman will dive into the brush and get away, as crazy as he is, at the first sight of the law. The asylum will flash across the hillman's vision; he'll know it'll mean six months again. The county officer wants to talk to the hillman, find out what he's seeing this time.

Dismounting, Jett looks at the road too, advancing as he looks and kicking at the hoof holes and ruts with the toe of his boot. The hillman doesn't jump, doesn't try to escape when he spots the sheriff, but stands still, watching. He's the first to speak when the two are twenty feet apart. Across his face flashes an expression of relief. Seems as if he's found assurance in the steady gaze of the sheriff at the road.

"Floyd."

The hillman steps closer. Jett raises his head slowly and smiles. He holds out his hand and shakes the mountaineer's. Then he begins looking at the road again, his eyes systematically examining all the hoof holes while the hillman leans on his stick. The hillman passes a shaky hand across his forehead and wipes the sweat from his face as if he had just passed through a danger. His voice becomes stronger. Some of the wildness leaves his eyes.

"Cain't find 'em hyar, Floyd."

"Mean the faces, Andy?"

"Faces, 'at's hit. Hain't down so fer though. Cain't see 'em lessen yuh go yander." The hillman points awkwardly with his thumb toward Porky Ridge.

"Face of Jesus, isn't it, Andy?"

"Hit air Jesus. God!"

"Funny, Andy! Funny how the faces got on the road."

"Hit shore air funny."

The hillman smiles and gives a toss of his head. He blows hard through his mouth once. Stands more erect and his hands are steadier. Plenty of indication that his mind isn't really disordered *yet.* Moonshine hasn't put things into his head yet. Must be faces or the county officer wouldn't be looking for them. Others have seen the faces. The hillman takes an interest. Looks intently at the road as he follows the sheriff back to his horse.

"Where's the first face, Andy?" the county officer asks, mounting.

"Down a mile. Afore yuh git tuh Porky."

Jett looks earnestly at the hillman.

"Better cut out the moonshine, Andy. You know what happens. Bats in your garret again. Anathoth!"

Protesting innocence, the hillman watches the sheriff ride on.

Relief in the sheriff's mind as he rides. Concern, too. Relief because the nigger's account of the faces looks less like a hoax. Concern because of the oddness, the mystery of the clear, fresh morning. When his horse rounds a bend in the road and starts uphill again toward the gap cut through the tail of Porky Ridge, the sheriff sees the figures of several men standing in the middle of the road ahead. They are looking at the road and pointing. Two women stand back a little in the laurel scrub bordering the road. They stand close together. Looks as if they're whispering. A boy standing near them is the first to see the approaching sheriff. The boy speaks and points and they all look around. The men straighten up. The women step closer to the road.

On all the faces there are looks of suspense now as the county officer dismounts. He throws the reins over his horse's head. The group of men and women closes in around the sheriff, saying nothing. All look intently at the road. At a face. Likeness of Christ in bas-relief. Closed eyes and crown of thorns. Suffering Christ. Marks of wheels turning off the road into the laurel and of horses jerked suddenly away from the faces. The group of hill folks step quietly after the sheriff as he moves on.

Again they all stop. Another face. Men and women tiptoe up close. Stand silently while the sheriff wrinkles his brow and bites his mustache. When he stoops, bends over close to the image, the modeling seems crude. Forty feet down the road another face. Distance makes it live. Strange effect, as if the crucified body were entering the earth.

The group around the sheriff is enlarging now. Men and women breaking through the laurel, stepping on the road timidly.

"Saviour! Jesus Lord!" a woman mumbles. She prays aloud.

Men near her fidget. Back away a little. A woman says, "Pentecost," and sobs lightly. An old hillman sings:

"Rock of ages,
Cleft for me."

Two hillman step into the woods and come out in a few minutes licking their mustaches.

"When'd you first see the faces?" the sheriff addresses the whole crowd, looking from one to another in quick succession.

A hillman speaks, says the faces weren't there before dark last evening. Others verify with nods or short answers. Led by the sheriff the group moves slowly on again. Just short of the gap everybody stops. Another face. Faces seemed to be spaced about forty feet apart.

All stare at a figure approaching through the gap. Tall, flat-faced man with yellow hair. Carlsen, boss from the logging camp on the slope of Nightcap Mountain, is coming in long strides. He's scowling—scowling and striking his boot with a switch. When he's ten feet from the group Carlsen cuts in on a woman's protracted prayer. Cuts in with roars about work in the saw-mill being at a standstill. Niggers singing spirituals and picking banjos instead of working. Little Congo gone mad. Voodoo at work. Conjure tricks. Cheap —— nigger witch stuff!

Sheriff Jett smiles.

"What you mean by voodoo?"

What does he mean? The logging-camp boss means that some conjure man or woman is responsible. Looks like the work of Black George. Shriveled ape's about due to start something more. Wasn't it Black George who smeared a skull with wet sulphur stuff last year and stuck it in the swamp? And didn't the whole nigger settlement have to pay to get rid of the skeleton head? Didn't the sheriff himself have to take a nigger to the asylum because of the glowing skull?

Jett shakes his head.

"This is something different. That was a skull. Nature made it, meaning God, too, if you see it that way. These faces are something different. Hands made 'em. Huh! Mean to say that this stiff-fingered black man made these faces? Mean to say that even if his fingers were nimble, he'd have—he'd have—the—soul?"

Carlsen scratches his head, then his chin. His eyes stare around. The others look at the sheriff with open mouths. Expressionless faces. Puzzlement deadens eyes all around.

Blankness of faces; open mouths tell the sheriff he's worse than misunderstood. Both women and men look at him as if he were talking in a strange tongue. As he thinks of what he said, it seems odd. In his mind he takes the place of one of the hillmen, listening to what the sheriff said. He mustn't talk over their heads that way. After all, the object should be to clear up this business of the faces.

Looks like Carlsen's mind for once crosses the sheriff's. The logging-camp boss whips his boots and frowns.

"What's the good o' talkin', Sheriff? I got tuh git my niggers tuh work."

The county officer doesn't answer but moves on, the logging-camp boss following. When the hillmen and women start to follow, the sheriff makes them stay where they are. Just beyond the gap, is Little Congo, bad place for whites at such a time.

On the other side of the gap the two men pass more faces. Carlsen turns slightly as they approach a face and his right hand goes to his breast; quick upthrow of his right hand. He's making the sign of the cross. The sheriff sees him through the corner of his eye without seeming to. Every face is a station of the cross for the logging-camp boss, but between the faces he strikes his boots vigorously with his switch.

"Young nigger blew into town at sunup," says the sheriff. "Said you sent him. Said you gave him a knife—a knife to cut out the faces."

Carlsen doesn't answer. He stiffens some and strikes his boot with a loud whack.

"Said the knife was to cut the faces out of the clay," repeats the sheriff. "We locked him up."

Faint humming comes from the creek bottoms now. Melodious, soft humming.

" 'Fraid tuh cut 'em," says Carlsen. "Neddie's a hard nigger sometimes. Good cook though. Wish yuh hadn't jugged him."

"Why didn't *you* cut the faces out of the road?"

Carlsen acts as if he didn't hear the question. He holds his hands behind his ears, listening.

"Huh. Still at hit. Wonder they don' fall over. Wonder they don' git winded a-shoutin' an' a-moanin'."

It's plain that the logging-camp boss wouldn't hack at the images in the clay either. Down in his makeup there's superstition too. Sent a nigger out to do a job he wouldn't do himself. But would he, Sheriff Jett, cut the faces? *Would he?* Would he walk up and hack and dig at the image into which some hand had put suffering? Would he do it any quicker than others, whites or blacks? *He wouldn't.* Doesn't the skill that molded that face deserve higher respect? Sure stamp of genius in the clay? How many times has he, Floyd Jeff, reading of the Hun hordes demolishing priceless sculpture in French Cathedrals, felt hate and sorrow rise within him!

While these thoughts are working in the sheriff's mind he and Carlsen reach the creek on the other side of the gap. They ford it over a log. Singing comes from below, where the creek's wider, deeper; where black women do their wash. Down in front of the cabins, beyond close-growing willows, black forms are gathered close together. Singing comes:

"Ah got a crown,
Yo got a crown,
All God's chillun got a crown.
When Ah git to hebben gwine put on mah crown,
Gwine walk all ober God's hebben."

Somewhere in the group of blacks a banjo plays a low, soft accompaniment. And a hand is stroking a drum. Not a plucking of strings, not a thumping of the drum, but a brushing of chords, brushing of a taut skin. A thrummimg, soft, primitive, wild. Strings humming now like the voices:

"Hebbennnnnnnnn,
Hebbennnnnnnnn,
Eve'ybody talk about hebben
Ain't goin' dere,
Hebbennnnnn, hebbennnnn—"

Rhythmic morning. Trembling poplars and swaying willows. Jesus in song and clay.

Jett's spine tingles.

"Look," says Carlsen. His voice is like a discord. His body is ungainly, graceless, deformed against the willows. He is pointing to the left, at the edge of the swamp in the rear of the nigger cabins. Where a rotten black log lies like a sleeping monster. A face in the black earth near the end of the log. Another twenty-five feet beyond. Black clay faces for niggers. Jesus!

The heaven song still comes from beyond the trees along the creek—

"Hebennnnnnnn."

Threads of melody stretch; voices die like the vibration of cords.

The blacks choke their song. Banjos and drums snap off harmonies. Floyd Jett and Carlsen are seen. Black women in cabin doorways, black men sitting on stumps. Naked black children staring with white eyes and backing under cover. Back of the other cabins, near the ooze of the swamp ground, the shack of Black George. The conjure man's sitting on his stoop now, grinning; steady grin as if his face were made that way.

The blacks speak or nod as the sheriff approaches. Timid or alarmed, some shift their bodies and look at each other. Others go to their cabins to look out doors. Way down at the end of the settlement a woman is still hanging to the harmony thread—

"—Ennnnnnnn!"

Carlsen is gazing across the creek and up the slope of Nightcap Mountain. Smoke slants northward above the logging camp. Power going to waste. Carlsen strikes his boot with his switch.

"Git tuh work!" he yells at the black men.

The men don't budge though. Their eyes are on the sheriff. Jett starts to speak but checks himself. Instead he approaches a group of black women. The women shift their feet, twist their shoulders. Their eyes speak uncertainty. When Jett's before them he motions to one of them to step up. It's the woman Judah, who works sometimes for Sheriff Jett's wife.

Judah wipes her eyes as she stands before him. She's still shaking a little from emotion, from the fervor of song. She readjusts her one-piece calico dress where it's slipped from her shoulders.

"Marse Floyd, mornin'!" Her greeting is like a song.

"Like to talk to you Judah. Inside."

She leads him away from the others, under the willows, beyond the path worn to the creek, to a cabin with one window. The sheriff follows without a word to Carlsen, who whips his boots and glares at his workmen.

Inside the cabin where it's dim, Judah pulls a stool from a corner and remains standing. Jett closes the door and sits down. For a minute or two both are silent while a low buzz of voices come from the blacks up the creek. The black woman's eyes, unsteady, roaming about the cabin, seem to be looking for an answer to something. Puzzlement more than fear is in them.

"Judah, who you reckon made the faces?"

Close on the sheriff's question comes the thought in his mind that the subject is too big for her. Like most blacks she'll struggle for a profound answer. She knows talk about the supernatural, about visitations, won't do for Jett.

Shifting her feet and looking out the small window, she speaks in a low voice, lower than her natural contralto.

"Nigger Ernie say he brung de faces."

"Ernie? Who's Ernie?"

"Ernie am from de No'th. Ernie, he mah sistah's boy. Jes' come las' week. Jes' come to visit an' preach to us niggers."

The sheriff unbuttons his coat because the air in the cabin is smelly, stuffy and thick. He knows better than to press questions too hard, too fast. The black woman's expression has changed. There's a certain pride revealed in her eyes. Pride over a miracle worked by her nephew. Come to think about it, the other blacks were treating her with a certain reverence outside. She was showing her importance when the sheriff first spotted her, before she saw him coming down the creek with Carlsen. She's talking in whispers now because she wants to preserve that importance; she knows that ears may be listening against her cabin wall.

"How you know Ernie brought the faces?"

"How I know? 'Kase Ernie he say he gwine bring Jesus to us—he gwine bring miracle."

"He said that yesterday? Last night?"

"Marse Floyd, las' evenin' Ernie he say he's gwine prove he talks with de Lawd. He gwine prove dat de Lawd God give him powah of doin' miracles. He say to us while he preach las' evenin', 'Yo'-all has sinned an' yo'-all has ben listenin' to de devil o' conjure man who am in de pay o' de devil. I'se gwine show yo'-all dat dis voodoo man am fraud, am cheat. I'se gwine pave de roads wid de image of de Lawd Jesus. I isn't gwine play with toads an' steamin' pots lak de conjure man. I'se gwine work wid de Lawd.' Dat's what Ernie say, Marse Floyd, an' de faces come."

"Did Ernie mean Black George?"

"Shore he mean Black George! George he all de time conjurin'—flamin' skulls an' dat kind devil's work."

"Well, where was George when Ernie was talking thataway?"

"George, he's sittin' in de door o' his shack. He's laughin' an' takin' on while Ernie preach. Laughin' an' talkin' to hisself while Ernie preach. Grinnin' an' mumblin' is what he do while Ernie preach."

Sheriff Jett lights a stogie. He breaks the match; juggles the pieces in his palm. The plot's as deep-lying as ever. Whose hands guided by genius, inspired by feeling, produced in clay an impression that has the power to halt industry, that brings white hillmen from their corn-plowing and wood-cutting? Who's the artist that made the sheriff himself stand in awe before an image in clay. Now that he thinks of it, he was stepping softly; had the feeling heavy footfalls might disturb sleep. Miracle? Of course a miracle! Could Ernie have wrought it?

"Judah, those faces had to be worked by fingers and thumbs—took hands to do them. Miracle all right—may be the Lord's miracle—but it needed hands."

The sheriff flicks the ashes from his stogie. He's becoming involved, getting tangled trying to explain; his words are puzzling to himself.

Mouth open and eyes blank, Judah stares at Jett.

"Can Ernie make pictures? Can his hands make those faces?"

She shakes her head slowly. She rocks her body and gazes around stupidly as if she were drugged.

"Why you-all afraid of Jesus? Why does the face of Jesus scare you?"

"Us ain't 'fraid o' Jesus. Us 'fraid devil! Dat's it."

"Huh!" Jett frowns and then fixes his eyes sternly on the black woman.

Things are getting more tangled. The woman's grabbing at another superstition.

"What devils," says Jett. "Stop beating about the bush. Stop talking in puzzles. I'll put you niggers where you'll talk if you don't loosen up. Devils—huh! What about them? I'll put all of you in the crazy house. Have all the nonsense you like around your own creek but your stuff's getting on the nerves of the whites. Now who's going to bring devils?"

Judah takes a long breath. She glances at the door and at the window. She takes a step backward, seems to be trying to find the true center of the cabin.

"Black George say he gwine make devils in de road." She leans forward as she whispers. "Dis mawnin' he laugh at Ernie. He say Ernie cheap No'the'n fraud. He say he kin do same as Ernie."

"Well, can he?"

"Black George cain't. But niggers think he kin."

"How you know he can't?"

" 'Kase George is lost nigger. He's gwine to hell. Ernie he tell us all how

George do tricks. George he ain't sanctified o' de blood. De Lawd does miracles. De devil, no."

Jett digs up a theory in his mind, lays it out—the theory that the preacher or conjure man must be the scupltor. But the theory's knocked cold. Both black men claim the power of making faces on the road. *Both* can't. Idea's grotesque. Ernie's proved his magic's worked. Black George would never threaten to work a magic he wasn't sure of realizing. Faulty voodoo ends a nigger's prestige.

Black George can make devils on the road if he said he could. Ernie the preacher, a witch doctor with new tricks, is edging in on Conjure George. At the end of his train of thought the sheriff is no nearer the solution. Conflicting ideas seem to be tying his brain into a knot. Religion and voodoo at daggers' points. Black jealousy. Black rivalry to turn a rhythm of life to private gain. The deeper mystery wins. The sheriff is getting nowhere; his reasoning is dull.

Judah's eyes are dull and she's still shaking her head stupidly. He'll have to do what he hates to do now—scare the truth out of the two rivals in magic. May have to threaten torture. Both'll hate to lose their prestige.

A loud knock comes to the cabin door and it opens, showing the blond head of Carlsen.

"Better come out," he says. "Dead nigger. New nigger called Ernie."

Screams come from Judah and drown out a question from Jett as he rises and goes out the door. Piercing, maniacal hysteria. The blacks fall away before it; it's like driving hail beating them back under the willows. They make groups and the groups tighten. Carlsen is switching his boot again. Black children are crying and running for cover under their mothers' skirts. Wild orchestration.

"Where's the dead man?" the sheriff yells at Carlsen.

"Ask the choc'late nigger."

The logging-camp boss points at a dark mulatto in the middle of a group. The mulatto comes forth hesitatingly at the quick commanding gesture of the sheriff and stands shaking. Quivering voice tells about finding Ernie face down in the swamp, stone dead. Mention of Ernie again brings Judah out of her cabin and her staccato laughs cut the sheriff's questions in half.

Jett leads the mulatto around a cabin that shields some from the rain of discordant shrieks.

"Where?" asks the sheriff.

The mulatto points toward the swamp, and is pushed on ahead. Carlsen follows behind the sheriff; he keeps lashing his boot with the switch, making the mulatto jump, sometimes duck.

"Do you have to do that?" asks Jett.

Carlsen stops whacking his boot, but he flicks the end of suckers on stumps they pass. His face reddens.

"This ain't gittin' my men tuh work."

"When'd you first see this dead Ernie," asks the sheriff, catching up with the mulatto.

"Jes' now. Dis mawnin'. Ernie daid. Po' Ernie."

The ground grows softer, blacker. Dead, decayed branches powder under their feet; feet lift with a sucking sound. The hysterical laughter of Judah sounds nearer. Jett paused to wave her back as she appears from behind a cedar tree. She's begging to go to Ernie. When Jett makes angry gestures she begins shouting that George killed Ernie.

" 'Course he did," says Carlsen. "Bet he'll git away too. Why don' you nab the ——?"

On the three men go, over the decay and rot of generations. Logs crumble, fall apart at the touch of a boot-toe. Dripping foliage, wet sticky leaves. The white men brush their necks and hands at the contact. They come to a narrow brooklet. Everything looks dead but feels alive to the touch.

The mulatto halts suddenly. Takes a step backward. His white eyes stare ahead and his nostrils dilate. He points at a figure lying on the ground near an old stump. It's hardly distinguishable.

The earth is black like the suit on the dead man; the outflung arms of the corpse might be the branches of a dead tree. The mulatto doesn't seem to be staring exactly at the body. The impression comes to the sheriff that the mulatto is not pointing directly at it but a little to the left, at a stump. The black isn't shrinking from the corpse!

Jett tries to push the mulatto ahead but he's rigid; he resists.

"Mah Gawd! De face!"

The county officer and Carlsen strain their eyes.

"What face? Where?" asks Jett.

"Don' yo' see? Don' yo' see? Good Lawd!"

"What kind of face. I can't see any face. Is it like the other faces? Jesus? If you don't move on and show me I'll kick you all the way there!"

"Ah'm goin'. But don' yo' see de devil by de stump."

"——! I don' see nothin'," says Carlsen.

"Huh!" The sheriff gives the mulatto another push. "Now I see it. Beyond the body. Near the stump. Horns straddling the stump. Face of a devil all right."

Carlsen sees the face now. He presses behind the sheriff. The mulatto hangs back. Devil in the clay all right. Jett stoops to see the bas-relief close. Like pictures of the devil in books. Like a child's idea of Satan. Horns. Grinning mouth. Even teeth—two long protruding ones. Long mustaches. The sheriff is noting the characteristics in his mind. Same features he's seen in picture books. Same idea. Huh!

"Dat's Black George's voodoo," whines the mulatto. "He say he gwine bring devil an' he do."

"You didn't mention seeing the devil before, didn't say there was anything here but the corpse! Jett jerks the mulatto by the arm. "Was the face there this morning?"

"Ah don' see de face when Ah see de co'pse dis mawnin', Marse Floyd."

Jett steps over the body and a few feet beyond. The mulatto must have seen the corpse from a distance. Couldn't see the face because of the stump's being in the way maybe. Was the face put there before or after the nigger Ernie died?

"Ah seed Ernie way off, Marse Floyd. Den I run. Ah don' see devil till dis minute."

Jett walks back to the body, rolls it over. Body's cold and the skin's turning gray, ashy, as it always does on dead negroes. The county officer can't find any wounds or marks, but there's a sweetish smell that rises from the half open mouth.

"Listen," says Carlsen.

Shouts and screams are coming from the creek settlement. Grow louder. They ride low under the wet trees, seem to skim the murky, soggy earth.

The county officer examines the earth near the body, then walks over to the devil face. Near the stump and the face there are footprints. Prints of a small bare foot. But they only appear near the stump where the ground is higher, dryer. Away from the stump the earth's too watery, too soft. The sheriff's footmarks close up as he steps.

"Hell's a-breakin' loose, Floyd," says Carlsen.

Sounds like hell's breaking loose, as the sheriff listens. Yells and shoutings. And there goes the maniacal laugh of Judah again. A dull distant pounding comes between shouts, like the running of many feet.

With a gesture toward Carlsen, Jett starts on a run across the marshy ground. Carlsen and the black man follow. The feet of the three men strike the earth with a slapping sound. Sometimes black water shoots up to their faces. They hurdle black rotted logs only to go knee-deep in the mire. The pernicious clutch of the earth on Carlsen's right foot sends him to the ground, head foremost. He swears. Endless oaths over "monkey business." Raves about his saw-mill's being idle while he runs, while he helps the sheriff act out a comic play.

Jett doesn't look back, doesn't answer, but he's struck by the truth of the logging-camp boss' charge. He, the sheriff, has been since dawn trying to run down a trick of black men. He's been wandering around, flying from one point to another like a child playing "Who's Got the Button?" Ironic smiles come to his face as he thinks of the comedy going on. Black magic is keeping him fooled.

As he races over the swampy ground, about to stumble at every step, held fast sometimes by the clutch of the mud, flinging mud right and left with his feet, he might be, as the logging-camp boss said, a comic opera sheriff. Carlsen back of him floundering grotesquely in the slime; the black man white-eyed, stepping gingerly past snake-like branches. Mud flying. Steady slapping. Comic opera sheriff!

The shouts ahead grow still louder. The voice of Judah mounts above the din. She's stopped laughing and is commanding. Her voice is a roar, unnatural bass that cries:

"Bust him! Kill him!"

Leaving the swamp, the sheriff turns around the first cabin facing the creek and sees all the niggers gathered into a mob at the other end of the settlement. Plain what that assembling of fanatics means. They're after Black George. Judah is inciting them to break into his cabin.

The ground is solid now, even, hard. Cabins and willows. Amphitheater now! Mob scene. Rescuing sheriff. Play-acting stuff!

When he's half-way to the mob two strong niggers swing a small boulder between them. Let it go against the door. The door quivers. The boulder falls back, rolls on the foot of a nigger, who howls.

Everything seems comic to the sheriff as he runs. He's glad Marshal Steve Dodie didn't come along to witness the burlesque that's being staged. Dodie with his cynical eyes and smiles. Jett glances back of him, has a glimpse of Carlsen just coming out of the swamp and stopping to get his breath under the willows. God, but it's a good setting for a play! Creek. Willows. Dark background of the swamp. Black people battering down a door. There it goes. Torn from its hinges. Why not carry the business of the play to the limit? Why not make it even more dramatic. Without stopping, Jett draws his forty-four from its shoulder holster. Fires in the air.

The blacks, about to rush the doorway of the conjure man's cabin, stop, look around at the coming sheriff and fly for the willows. God! Jett laughs. Laughs at himself. But there's a reaction just as he reaches the conjure man's shack. Here's where the business has to become real. Here's where the "monkey business" has to stop. When he, the sheriff, comes out of the conjure man's hole there'll be a climax or a dead witch doctor. No more running around the Little Congo and the swamp like a beheaded chicken, no more playing hide-and-seek with black tricksters.

Jett's form filling the doorway blots out the only light entering the windowless cabin. He can't see, but he hears a quickening breath.

"Don' shoot, Marse Floyd!" Whimpering voice comes from a black corner.

Huh! The sheriff forgets for a minute he's holding the gun. No need of it; he feels as if he were holding a stage property. What he needs is light. He strikes a match, finds a fat-pine torch and lights it. He lifts the shattered door and leans it against the opening.

When he turns from the door the conjure man is crouching against the wall. Dried, shriveled, black magician. Jett straddles an old chair.

"Why'd you kill Ernie?"

The black man doesn't start, doesn't jump at the question. He's afraid of something, but it doesn't seem to be the death of Ernie. No whining declarations of innocence. No plea for mercy. Doesn't seem to have a vision of the gallows as guilty black men usually have. There's a loosening of his lips, letting out an almost natural whisper:

"Marse Floyd, yo' is on de wrong track. Ah don' do in Ernie."

Whistling softly, Jett taps the floor with his heels and watches the conjure man climb to the top of the high box in the corner. The black is pretty calm except when excited cries and mutterings come from outside. When Judah's voice rises his body gives a jump.

"Who killed Ernie?"

"Ernie he pizen hisself. Ernie he bad nigger from de No'th. He run heah 'kase o' police. He go crazy dis mawnin' and drink somethin'. Den he run t'rough swamp. Judah she make out George killed Ernie."

Smoke from the fat-pine makes the sheriff cough. Smoke lies in a sheet dimming the black's features.

"Who made the faces?"

"Ernie he make faces. He say he gwine make Jesus in de road an' he do."

"How you think he made 'em?"

"Ah don' know." The conjure man shakes his head stupidly. He closes his eyes to slits and looks at the floor, paws at his cheeks with stiff bony fingers.

Jett's face flushes. His hands grip the rounds of the chair. Comedy again. Getting nowhere.

"You said you were going to make devils in the road, didn't you?" You told the niggers you were going to make 'em, didn't you? Ernie had you going, doing miracles under your eyes. Guess you knew how Ernie did that trick and was going to do the same thing."

"Ah jes' foolin' niggers. Ah cain't make devils." Black George whispers this—low whisper—while his eyes glance at the door.

Without rising, the sheriff slides his chair over nearer the black man.

"I don't want any more hedging, you understand? You're going to talk or I'll take you to Leeston and put the screws to you. I'll let Steve Dodie wring the truth out of you. Ever hear of the third degree? Well, it's meat for the Leeston marshal. You know how he hates you people. He'll make you say you killed Ernie whether you did or not. "Near the body of the nigger Ernie there was a face of the devil. Drawn in the mud. Huh! Didn't know that, did you? Well, I'm going to know who made that face. Ever see a cat play with a mouse? That's Dodie's way with niggers. Plays with 'em until they're mad. Has a way of making their bodies sore. If the wind touches your back or legs you'll scream. To get a drink of water you'll say you killed Ernie. Dodie'll let you drop off to sleep for a minute or two, then wake you up. Let you go to sleep and wake you up again; he'll do that night after night. Day after day. You see you'll only want two things—water and sleep. Pretty soon you won't be afraid of hanging because it'll mean rest."

The conjure man shrinks against the wall, and when his eyes, catching the gleam glitter of the handcuffs dangling and thumping on the chair over the back of the chair, expand, pinkish veins grow livid in his white eyes. Voices drift in from outside. Sound nearer than before. The black's life is at stake, but so's his voodoo. When he speaks it's in a whisper so low, so husky that the sheriff can't make out the words.

Jett thinks though that the black's whisper had something to do with the one who wrought the faces, so he dangles the bracelets over the chair until they clink.

"Who?"

"Ah don't know de real name." Whisper says it, a little louder whisper that seems barely to reach to Jett.

"White?"

The conjure man gives a little start. Then he nods. He listens and looks around.

"Marse Floyd, Ah come with him in de mawnin'. Ah show yo' de— Marse Floyd, Ah fetch de—de white—de white man in de mawnin'. Ah fin' him den fo' yo'. Ah cain't now."

"Huh. Mean tomorrow mornin?"

"Ah mean dat ah kin show yo' de man dat—de man dat make de faces ef yo' come in de mawnin'."

Jett frowns. The nigger's bargaining.

This conjure man with all his appearances of fright, with a dried-up body and slanting forehead, has a cunning that is a match for the county officer. Jett, rather faintly at first, then more clearly during the passing of three silent minutes, sees that the black man is sparring for time. The conjure man wants another black night. He wants—he wants devil faces on the roads. Wants—the white— What in —— is the matter with his, Sheriff Jett's mind, his memory. Footprints of a boy in that swamp!

Rising, the sheriff draws his gun. The scene is theatrical again. Not comedy so much now as melodrama. Jett hates to hand this Black George over to Dodie to break, but the farce has to end.

The conjure man, paralyzed almost at the cocking of the sheriff's forty-four and seeming to draw in his eyes from the glitter of the handcuffs held in the sheriff's left hand, holds up his hardened palms.

"Ah show him, Marse Floyd. Ah show white man!"

"White *boy,*" says Jett.

"Marse Floyd, ef I gwine show yo' him, yo'—yo'—yo' gwine tell niggers dat he do miracles, an' not Black George do dem?

"You can do your talking to Dodie. You'll want a drink of water—want to sleep. Save your voice to ask for 'em."

"Marse Floyd! Marse Floyd! Fo' Gawd's sake! Ah show him! Look at de do'. Marse John! Marse John! Come out."

There's nobody at the door. The buzz and hum of voices come from outside. Now and then a voice raised above the hum. Back of Jett a whisper. He turns.

The sheriff rubs his eyes. Says, "Well," dryly, huskily. His face flushes. Yellow-haired, freckled boy sitting on the box in the corner. Barefoot, blue-eyed boy. Hill wildness and fear in his eyes. He's pulling his fingers now and looking at the sheriff; he's rubbing his bare feet against each other.

"Dat's him, Marse Floyd, dat's Marse Johnny from Nightcap. He make Jesus fo' Ernie an' Ernie he don' pay. He gwine make devils fo' George an' George he do pay. George he pay Marse Johnny eight bits 'fore he make faces. Ernie he deadbeat."

"Well," says Jett. "Well!"

"Honey, show Marse Floyd yo' eight bits."

The boy pulls change out of the pocket of his jean pants. He lays the pieces of money out on the box and places them edge to edge. Two-bit pieces, nickels, pennies.

"Well," says Jett again. "Well, well."

Query in the boy's eyes. He looks from Jett to the black man and pushes the coins over on the box.

Conjure George cocks his head. He grins and pushes the money back.

"Dat yo' money, honey. Contrack am a contrack. Yo' make faces in de road fo' George ef Marse Floyd don' come. Devils don' come dis evenin' but dat ain't yo' fault. Put de money in yo' pocket, chile. George ain't hyp'crite like Ernie."

Jett returns the gun to its holster and the handcuffs to his pocket. When he looks at the boy again it's with a relaxed face. He modulates his voice when he speaks.

"From Nightcap?"

Needless question. The black said the boy was from across this high hill, from the other side where the laurel's thick, where the ledges resound to the screams of wildcats. Jett's hunted there, where cabins tucked away in the thick timber are hard to find. The boy must be of the Meadowes clan.

"Meadowes?" Jett asks.

The boy nods, color coming to his face.

"How you know Ernie?"

Fluttering voice answers. Voice of adolescence; pitch changing. High, then low, voice says he didn't know Ernie. Knew Judah when she nursed his maw.

"Huh!" The sheriff throws a glance at Black George.

"Judah she fetch Johnny to Ernie," says the conjure man. "Judah an' Ernie dey jine heads to make miracles. Dat's why Judah strut aroun' while Ernie preach. Dat's why Judah hol' her head high dis mawnin' when niggers fin' faces. Judah she auntie o' miracle man. Dat make her big woman in Li'l Congo."

Jett takes a step nearer the boy on the box.

"Who showed you how to make faces? How'd you learn to take clay and make, make—something—something—from nothing?"

"Hain't got larnin'. Jes' do hit." The boy rubs his bare feet together. The eight bits clink in his pocket as he fingers them.

Murmurings still come from outside. The voice of Carlsen now and then rises above them. He's trying to get his niggers to go to work. The crack of his switch on his boot is a steady emphasis on his oaths. Blacks still in the grip of superstition. There's a minute's lull. Then the logging-camp boss' voice bellows through the crack between the jamb and the leaning door. Bellows about power going to waste while a county officer hobnobs with a witch doctor.

"By ——, he'll git to the legislatir! Like —— he'll git thar! Guess ef he went he'd play-act all tha time." Carlsen's voice strings away. He's holding a rapid-fire talk with himself. "Queer sheriff. Actor more'n a sheriff! Wish Steve Dodie war hyar; he'd git niggers to work or kill 'em."

Jett's face flushes. He takes the boy's hand, gently urging him from his seat on the high box, leads him to the door. When the sheriff lifts the door and sets it alongside the wall he reaches back for the hand again. The hand is ready; seems to want to be taken. Soft, thin hand that lies in the sheriff's rough one. Soft hand that presses against a big palm; flesh speaking to flesh, saying, "Hold on to me."

They go out the door, Jett and the boy, Johnny; their magic weaves a silence. The conjure man remains in the shadows of his cabin, his eyes revealing a fear. Five cabins down the creek Judah peeks out from a doorway. Fear in her eyes too.

Carlsen, still slapping his boots with the switch, steps up. He throws a puzzled look at the boy. Frowns at the sheriff. Slowly the blacks advance nearer from the willows.

"Want clay," says Jett. "Red clay. Take two or three niggers and get some clay."

The logging camp boss screws his face into a knot. His eyes close to slits, open suddenly. Flash green.

"—— with clay! My mill wastin' power! Niggers standin' a-roun' an' a sheriff a-wantin' tuh play with mud. Sent fer yuh to help work tuh git agoin'!"

"—— with you, then," says Jett. "Here you!" he yells at three blacks standing together. "Get your arms full of clay. Red clay. Fetch it here. Hustle!"

The three black men run down the creek bank and disappear through the gap on the Leeston road.

When Jett and the boy sit down on the pebbled creekside the blacks advance slowly from cabins and willows. They form a ring around the sheriff and the boy. Men, women and children throw white eyes on each other. Looks like a powwow, like a council. A white-haired black man limps out of a cabin. He seems to take up ages between steps. The boy Johnny looks fearlessly from black face to black face. Carlsen breaks through the circle roughly, stands whipping his boots.

"Huh!" he says.

"Show you a miracle pretty soon," says the sheriff. "Show you a lot of miracles. Show you—" Jett puts his lips close to the boy's ears. Whispers, "Jesus. Then the devil, when the clay comes."

The clay's coming now. Three weighted black men slide along, feeling their way. Clay piled in their arms up to their chins. A section of the Leeston road coming. A hole is made in the black circle, letting in the clay carriers, who dump their loads, fall back to fill the gap. Complete the circle.

Mouths open wider and white eyes stare. Loud breathings come. The stink of sweat trapped within the circle of blacks is heavy. A willow stirs near the circle of blacks, bends over as if to see. Two swamp oaks stay rigid, aloof.

Clay. Red clay shaping! Thin white fingers kneading. Face coming out of the clay. Bas-relief of Jesus. Twenty caressing movements of a hill hand and a lump becomes the Nazarene. Livid face looking up from the pebbled creekside at whites and blacks.

Now Lucifer's appearing out of a red lump. Satan given eyes first to look malignantly, then a mouth to grin up at black men and women.

Carlsen jerks a young black roughly by the shoulder.

"See? What'd I tell yuh? All —— nonsense, yore miracle stuff. Kid pitchers. Thar's yore voodoo. Kid 'at made tha' pitcher o' tha' skull 'at scairt yuh niggers las' year, I bet. Kid's pitchers. Git tuh work!"

The young black backs away out of the circle a little way. Others start, then hesitate—hesitate because another face is growing out of a red lump. Another Jesus. Then another Satan. Eyes of the blacks are not so big now and feet shift. Some step away. Faces growing fast out of the clay. Yawns come. Black children begin to wander off to float sticks in the creek. A woman picks up a child and carries it under her arm to the water, begins bathing it.

"Git tuh work," bellows the logging-camp boss.

Men move away lazily to the creek, ford it over a log. They string up the slope of Nightcap Mountain, wind in among the cedars and disappear. Carlsen follows, beating his boot with his switch.

"Hustle!" he keeps saying.

Across the creek, just before he enters the timber after the blacks he turns, looks back. He sees the creek bank cleared of blacks. Sees the sheriff and boy alone. Faces are still growing. The county officer is lying on his belly now, eyes riveted to thin white hands kneading. The white-haired negro sits on his cabin stoop, blinking. He yawns. Closes his eyes. Falls asleep. A woman carrying an armful of firewood throws only a glance at the two whites on the creek bank and at the livid red images as she passes. Other women stand ankle-deep in the creek, washing clothes. Their bodies shine, move like liquid, obey an inaudible rhythm. Children float sticks or explore the creek-bottom timidly.

Black George and Judah appear at their doors; their white eyes are big against the shadows. Laughter greets them, derisive laughter that makes the black children look up from their play. A half-grown girl throws a pebble at Judah. Judah and the conjure man close their doors.

Carlsen turns abruptly and takes a few steps back toward the log ford. He looks intently at the blacks standing in the creeks, at the cabins, at the boy surrounding himself with clay faces and at Jett lying on his belly, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. The logging camp boss raises both hands to his mouth, makes a trumpet of them, calls, "Floyd!" through the trumpet of hands.

"Yes." Jett says it mechanically, without looking up.

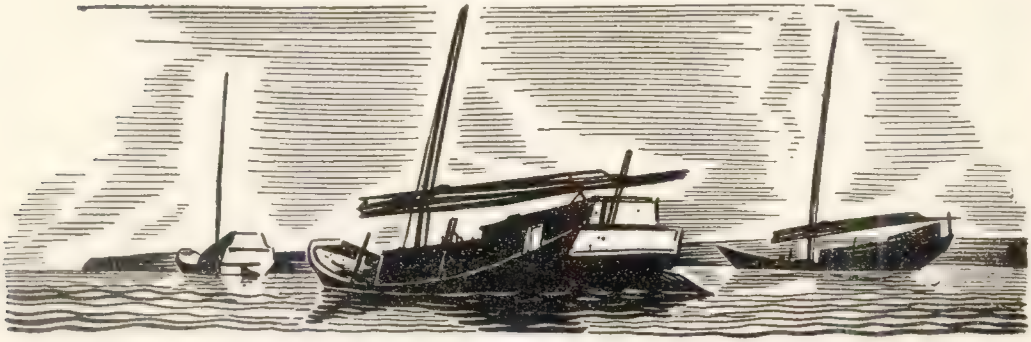
Taking a long breath behind his hands, Carlsen expends it without utterance. He takes in another breath and expends it. His eyes dart around the creek bank. "Thanks," he says with just enough force to reach Jett.

Mechanical "all right" comes from the sheriff.

When Carlsen moves on to the edge of the cedar forest a black woman pauses in her work to tap another on the shoulder. They get their heads close together, look at the two whites on the creek bank and chuckle. They shake their heads, pick up the calico clothes floating at their feet and rub them.

A Night's Entertainment

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL



THE stench of China was still in Halliday's nostrils. He rolled his head deep into the gray pillow only to have the odor, intensified, burn down into his lungs. Sweat seemed to glue his face to the cloth. His body was wet as from summer rain.

The inn room, the outer air, the street below, all Daitotei—the Chinese quarter of Taihoku—was hot, sweet, uncannily silent and unpleasant, as if some smothering cloud of feathers, plucked green and smelling of the live bird, draggled, limp with moisture, had been spread over the Formosan city. Halliday twisted to his back, opened his mouth, gulped hotness and then sat wearily upright, swinging his feet to the matting of the floor. A cockroach promptly ran across his toes.

The white man drew his legs up under him, reached to the foot of the short bed and, fumbling in the clothes he had thrown there earlier in the night, found cigaret and match. The flare of the Tokyo-made phosphorus partially lit the room and Halliday reread the first zigzag characters of an ancient placard:

EPIDEMICS POSITIVELY ILLEGAL
ANY SICKNESS FORBIDDEN
DRESS ALL OVER BODY

His face did not change—not even the falling of the hot match-head to his bare knee, leaving the room in darkness again, altered a muscle. For minutes he sat motionless on the bed. When the cigaret, hot to his lips, had been rubbed out between his fingers and dropped to the matting, he thrust his legs out and lay back. His eyes closed rigidly as he fought for sleep, the very effort defeating his purpose. He began to count, remembered that one was supposed to visualize objects, and began to sail imaginary ships down a straight canal—*Is so, ni so, san zo, shi so*—

In some way the thought of ships, of water, led him to count icy and frosted drinks—*ip pai, ni hai, sam bai*—until his throat became parched, dry and tight.

If he had been restless before he was nervously alert now. To clap for a boy was useless. He had tried it before with no other result than the squeaking of a rat in the lower regions.

Eyes wide, Halliday began to curse noiselessly.

He started with Warren, of his own company, the A.-I., for missing the *Rokkuku Maru* out of Yokohama and thus making this night necessary. He swiftly shifted to Jenkins, the Asiatic-Import's man at Osaka who had told him that this place of pollution was the only place a white man could properly stay in at

Taihoku; he ended by considering the inn itself. It was, he believed, the worst hole from Vladivostok south. Then, and only then, did he remember that it was at Vladivostok where he had informed Jenkins of a marvelous inn in north Japan, marvelous only in the number of red ants which bit a fellow at night.

Jenkins was thoroughly vindicated now. Halliday wondered how long it would be before the fellow heard the story. Warren would tell him of course, provided Warren knew. Warren was not to find out! Halliday determined to bribe the part-Formosan, part-Chinese host to silence, if his Amoy dialect was good enough to get the story across.

Halliday's particular business in Taihoku was to arrange for the purchase of Pouchong tea, or better yet to determine the percentage of jasmine, white oleander and gardenia that scented the leaves. Even of greater importance, the home office—bugbear of the Orient—had a wild notion that Halliday might be able to purchase shoots or seedlings for transplantation in the Islands. Warren was to arrange the final details but Halliday—as usual—was to do the work.

This as well as Jenkins' tip had caused him to go to the dingy inn near Hokumongai, Daitotei's principal street. The flower mart, he had been told, was near it and fewer questions would be asked by the Japanese officials than if he stayed at one of the better hotels—where a fellow could get a bath, a decent cigaret, and where some one would be waiting to bring glass, bottle, and syphon of *Nunebeki*.

He wondered if it were midnight and decided that it was but no later. The air was breathless, heavier, more depressing each minute.

When Halliday had been driven by rickshaw to the inn, the alleys had been crowded. Every tea *hong* had been humming with the staccato accents of many tea-pickers, the few open spaces before the low buildings piled high with gaily flowered lead-lined boxes awaiting their contents, coolies had rushed coolie-fashion in every direction. Now the silence of the street outside was weird. It was as if everything human had been pressed into the filth underfoot by the heat, the heavy air, the lack of any sound.

The silence was so great that he found himself searching for some sound, however tiny—the creaking of wicker, the crack of a joist, the pad of a mongrel nosing garbage. He heard none.

LIKE a blow—a blow which jerked the white man upright—a flute blew a long discordant note. Instant with it dog-bellied guitars and stringed instruments set up a rapid minor jangling. The noise increased until Halliday would have almost preferred the silence again.

A shrill voice twisted unmelodiously in and out of the music. After running the swift gamut of all harsh undertones, it broke into a howl and a dog somewhere in a house lifted his head to keep it muffled company.

Sleep was entirely impossible. Halliday knew that the racket would keep up indefinitely. It was, he felt certain, either an effort to keep away evil spirits from the house of some dead man or entertainment by sing-song girls. Whichever it was, the noise would last for hours.

He slid off the bed and dressed in the dark. When he placed his hat on his head he could feel it stick in place and he threw the offending straw to the floor. His room was near the street; he was out in moments.

Under the tiled cornice of the inn he paused and lit a second cigaret. The tube was broken and he spat tobacco wryly.

It was no less hot and stifling in the open air. The street was dark and Halliday walked in the direction he was facing. He supposed that it would be cooler by the Tamsui where the eyed junks would be tied up for the night. But he had no idea in which direction the rough Bund was, and he did not especially care.

The alley turned and twisted. Another

ran into it and along the second way he could see lights and could hear the wail of flutes and the *pink-pink-ponnnng* of guitars with greater clarity.

He had walked slowly, yet his clothes were ungraciously stuck to his body. He stopped and eyed the lighted house with indecision. In it, he knew, would be nothing he hadn't seen a hundred times before, yet the thought of the mere physical presence of humans on this horrible night would be attractive. More, there would possibly be cool beer. Unless it was the preliminary to a funeral—then the beer would be replaced with chilled water and purple brandy. Strangers were always welcomed. Halliday started toward the lighted house.

In an elbow of the way, angled toward the radiance, he saw a dim temple, gray with the wearing of years. From the roof hung votive offerings, inscriptions and unlit lanterns. Almost opposite the entrance, and visible to the white man, was a singular seated statue of human dimensions and human aspect which seemed to look at Halliday with small weird eyes. The crimson belly was speckled with a white scum of paper pellets spat at it by worshippers. The columnar thighs beneath curved under the chiseled drapery.

The jangle of minor chords lessened a moment, and Halliday heard a creaking noise, squeaky like the voices of bats and hard on it the soothing voice of the rung bell—once, twice—silence—and then the wail of the women again.

The white man stopped short, wiped his forehead, shook moisture away from his eyes and then strode toward the house of the many lights. As he approached it the din became like the roar of surf on his ears, he caught the sounds of many voices and with them laughter.

He actually was at the entrance to the house before he stopped. It was, he realized perfectly, no devils who were being driven away. What fiends there were would be all inside and in human form. Even the thought of ice and iced drinks could not get him to cross the threshold. Once inside, to leave before morning would be insulting, and he could never stay that long. He wondered why he hadn't stayed at the damnable inn instead of allowing the last moisture of his body to pour out and leave him drained, sapped, of life and strength. He had never, he believed, experienced so hot, so still a night.

Halliday had been too many years in the Orient to even think, "I wish I were home." What he did think was, "I'm going to take a month off, and go up Benguet way—pretty soon."

He elaborated on the thought, leaning against the wall of the house. He'd coax Petersen to go along and possibly Hyde or Williams, they'd stay overnight with Beach at Santa Mesa and he'd see if he still had any tennis left in him.

Tennis! The heat, he supposed, was making him mad—he no longer had the staying quality nor the youth for that game. Involuntarily he touched the muscles of his right arm with the fingers of his other hand.

"I'm soft," he said half-aloud. "Smokin' too much, too—"

He was alert instantly. Some one in the dark had brushed against him, was still near him on the side farthest from the open door. Halliday caught the fragrance of some exotic odor—jasmine, he guessed. He stood perfectly still, neither speaking nor turning his head. He was certain that the other person did the same. His ears, keen, did not catch the tell-tale patter of feet.

Cymbals crashed and the music stopped abruptly, the last note lost in the echo.

A dozen men were at the door all at once.

One said angrily in Chinese of the Amoy dialect—

"I have paid!"

And another, more excitedly—

"Find her, or we all may pay!"

Halliday felt from behind a finger on his wrist.

His presence was discovered by all of them at once and a hundred questions, orders, insults, were rained at him until the second speaker, peering, knew Halliday for what he was.

"Li'la girl," this one said quickly. "Have gone. Likkee see, mebbe mo' bettah. Can do?"

Halliday said gravely:

"No see. No can do." Then, shrugging his shoulder, "Sing-song? Have got prenty mo'? Lartchee kine inside? One makee go? *Maskee.*" He spread out his hands as if that settled everything.

The speaker blurted:

"You clazy! Girl come heah. Ola tam we see, som' tam go an' we no see. *You* see!"

Some one farther from the white man barked that the devil with the eyes of the color of a willow plate would be sent to his fathers and the matter discussed without him. That no good would come from F'ong-Mui's using words obviously coined in some lower region which no one else understood.

F'ong-Mui, host of the house, his face still close to Halliday's, became more visibly angry at Halliday as he sensed the desire of his companions for entertainment not to be reckoned in the score. Since he was host he listened to his guests but worry was in his voice as he said—

"Why you come?"

Halliday could feel the finger-tips on his wrist tremble. He laughed for the first time since leaving the coaster.

"Come have look-see," he said. "You got prenty fine girl topside?"

"He is a fool," a deep voice insisted. "He knows nothing. Stick a knife in his ribs and let us search. We waste time. It was *I* who paid for the girl this night. He is a fool, nothing more, and blinder than a temple-bat or he would have seen her."

Halliday grinned.

"Get from my door!" F'ong-Mui snarled in Chinese.

Halliday moved none at all.

The deep voice continued:

"All white men are fools, and you are a fool to use their language, F'ong-Mui. Why do we wait? If it were not for the Japanese in this land rightfully ours, the girl would have lily-feet. As it is, she can run."

"Where?" F'ong-Mui asked practically. "She is hidden in some near doorway or in the temple. That is where they usually go. Do not be angry, Wah Li. She did not object to you. She is a new one—a wild savage from the hills. She has not yet been beaten but we will remedy that before very long. And you may have a hand in the teaching. Is that not fair?"

"What enjoyment is there in beating down a lily?" Wah Li asked, in his low deep voice. "But—yes, it is fair, provided we catch her!" He caught breath sharply. "Will you send this intruder to any gods he has, or shall I?"

F'ong-Mui bowed gravely.

"The honor is rightfully thine," he said. "Only let us, as you have said, waste no time."

"Watch me," Wah Li requested.

Halliday was watching, and closely.

There was, he realized, but one sensible thing to do—that was to run. By keeping in the shadows he was reasonably certain to spoil any aim. Since the Chinese did not know he understood what they intended, he could break away fast and be in shadow before they were aware of his intention. To stay, to shield the dancing-girl further, was unthinkable, idiotic! The thought of what would happen turned the heat of his body to ice and then left him hotter than before. The flutter of finger-tips on his wrist had changed to a tense grasp. Halliday believed he could feel every curved nail dig semicircles in his flesh. He was, he believed, smiling like the fool Wah Li had proclaimed him.

In the next moment of indrawn breaths Halliday felt that the very sky was pressing down upon him attempting to produce in him a lassitude which would make Wah Li's pleasurable duty swift and easy. Wah Li stepped close to him, one hand inside the loose black jacket. The Chinese was smiling as foolishly as Halliday himself.

As Wah Li's eyes narrowed Halliday said softly—

"Is there sense to all this, Wah Li?"

The Chinese words did nothing more than bring a tremor to some mouth-muscle but Halliday believed he had gained a moment of respite. He spoke again instantly.

"What does all this mean?" he asked quietly. "Is a girl sufficient to cause murder, Wah Li? I told you, or F'ong-Mui, that I had not seen her. I tell you again. I have not seen her. What more do you want?"

"You lie!" F'ong-Mui shouted. "Why did you permit us to think you spoke only pidgin? You lie! Your father was a liar, and your mother—"

"Silence," Wah Li whispered. He examined the white man carefully. "You have told the truth," he said finally. "You have not seen her. But, my friend, you know too much. Does a man forgive another who has agreed to kill him? No. Therefore—"

"Search for the girl if you so desire," Halliday said. "I will wait and see what result comes from it. As for remembering anything—I will forget you, and this night."

"That you will," the Chinese agreed.

Halliday shivered.

He began to talk at once.

"Are we men, or children?" he asked. "I came for amusement—" a squeaky voice shrilled that he would have it—"for amusement as any man might come. If a girl has run away is it business of mine? Do *men* excite themselves—"

"This is Taihoku, not China," Wah Li said doubtfully. "One word to the Japanese of this and —"

"I will say nothing," Halliday said earnestly. "I will forget this night. What oath can I give which will satisfy you?" Would they never start searching? If—when—they did would all go? Would they insist that he himself enter the house and in so doing reveal the girl? He realized that his deception would be the signal for murder. He must talk. What else could he do? And how hot it was to make a fellow use his head! "Come—we are all reasonable men. Now it seems to one of even my small intelligence that the proper thing under the existing circumstances is to—"

"He delays us," F'ong-Mui and several others protested:

"What has he said—nothing! He—"

Wah Li raised his hand.

"He understands the proper use of words—he is more than an ordinary white man, I suppose. He speaks nearly as well as I and vastly more courteously than the rest of you. Continue."

Halliday smiled.

A COOL little breeze, that brushed against one hot cheek gratefully. It came up the street and blew past him into the doorway.

"It has been a night like the lower regions," he said, still smiling. "That is why I came for amusement. I could not sleep. Hot—terrible heat, but now there is a little wind, a very tiny one with the breath of the sea in it and—"

"Poetry," Wah Li said, "but hardly to the purpose."

Nevertheless he and all the rest wriggled their nostrils. There was a moment of silence and then Wah Li said quietly:

"It smells to me more like a garden of jasmine, my white friend. Step away from the wall!"

The harsh order was accompanied by a rush of coolness, Halliday's rearward push and cry to run was almost lost in the first crash of thunder.

He had no chance for a second gesture nor for another word. As it was, he barely escaped Wah Li's first shrewd knife-stroke. What the dancing-girl did he could no longer determine, although he knew that her fingers were no longer biting into his wrist.

Something like a great humming-bird passed his head and he cried—

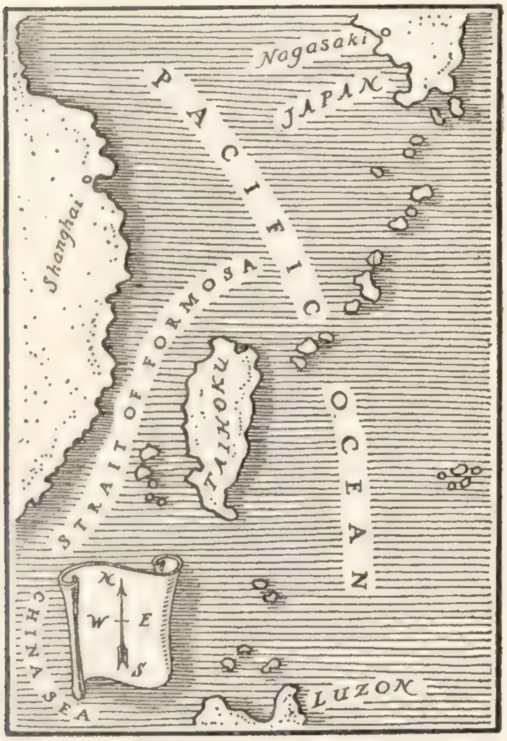
"Fight like a man, F'ong-Mui!"

He was rewarded by hearing Wah Li's deep chuckle.

"I see you intend to die like one," the Chinese said. "So be it."

Halliday said, "Amen," under his breath.

A shuddering sigh showed where some sing-song girl, old in her trade, watched on the inner steps. For an instant the silence was such that the little cracking of a man's ankle-bone sounded like a carabao whip. Then a roaring wind swept up the street, disastrous to candles. Light after light in the house flickered out until the hallway and street were dark.



As Wah Li stepped forward, an arm extended to keep others back, blue flame jagged across the sky, with thunder instant, pealing, crackling, braying ruin. While the blinding light was in every one's eyes Halliday jumped a pace back and then ran for his life.

He heard footsteps after him at once. Before he had run a dozen feet the thunder had faded to a distant grumble and a temple-bell in the Japanese quarter was beseeching Kaminari, god of the thunder, to spare all worshippers. At twenty feet a second knife hurtled past him, and with it rain.

The street was long, dark, irregular. Halliday trusted to speed to outdistance the Chinese. He knew that if he tried to outwit them he would be dragged from any hole he selected.

There was sufficient reason why the white man should not be allowed to escape. Murder had been attempted, and by Chinese entirely unloved by the ruling nation in Formosa. The white man knew the names of two—F'ong-Mui and Wah Li. Within hours after the men were reported both would discover beyond any doubt exactly who their ancestors were—in F'ong-Mui's case a mystery and in Wah Li's something to boast of—and what they thought of their descendants' devotional offerings.

The pattering of racing feet behind him seemed to lessen, to diminish, and Halliday half-turned his head. What he saw drove his heart to pounding anew. The Chinese were dividing. Some were disappearing into near-by houses, others, shadowy forms without seeming substance, leaped low board walls. All of them, Halliday realized, were preparing either to bring new feet to the chase or to cut him off.

He did not know these rat-channels—which doorway might lead to a short cut, which space between the board fences led to another alley. The Chinese did. Where they could find their way, he would be utterly lost.

He wondered where the girl had gone, but without interest. She was entirely forgotten. *He*, to both himself and the Chinese, represented the thing of importance.

Lest he be intercepted and the way blocked he increased his pace, splashing water from new-formed puddles at every stride. Once he slipped, fell and was on his feet again, his clothes wet and muddy. He reached the end of the alleyway, tried to swerve to the east to reach the outskirts of the Japanese district but saw three men swinging toward him. He whirled and at top speed began to run westward.

A light went on in a near house which shot out two men with such rapidity that they also stumbled and fell into the slimy filth of the narrow street.

Thunder still rumbled, low, protestingly. The far eastern sky was tinted with saffron. The distant bell kept up its silvery plea to the paunched god of stormy weather.

Halliday settled down to a trot. His lungs were beginning to protest. He was the fox; the hounds and lesser curs of the pack were running him until he tried for cover. Why? He supposed that the presence of a Japanese policeman would be sufficient to drive every pursuer to a hole, and leave nothing in the street save a crazy *seiyo-jin* whose story of the evening's entertainment would be laughed at as the tale of a drunkard. Even considering that Halliday wanted the sight of a white-clad officer. The Chinese's game was his also. He dared not try for cover.

His breath was shortening and rattled slightly as it issued from his straining throat. Rain beat on his face revivingly. He no longer heard the patter of feet over the patter of rain. Then to give his hopes the lie several gray figures, little more than lightness against the night, appeared at the far end of the way. He also heard a shout, dangerously near, from the direction in which he had come. For a moment he stood stock-still, only his heart racing, then he slipped into the shadow of a doorway, stooped and crouched, knees and finger-tips touching the stone.

The two racing bodies of men met. Voices questioned, denied, assured, disagreed. While they were arguing a rearguard appeared from the direction in which Halliday had been going.

While they spoke Halliday slipped along the friendly walls, and a hundred feet away broke into a run again. A light appeared in the door of a house as he passed, the carrier of it shouted, the Chinese were after him again.

The bell beat on his ears. He was running head down, doggedly. Exhaustion started to loosen the joints of his knees and set him to carrying his forearms stiff and rigid. He thought grimly—

"If I did this every day I'd be able to stand a good many sets of singles up Benguet way."

It came to him then that it was doubtful if he would ever get to Benguet at all. He told himself as sweat made his eyes smart and water that he didn't care—and ran the faster at the thought of death.

The game, indeed, seemed well in hand. Four Chinese speeded out of a side alley, but instead of pouncing on Halliday merely kept him on his way. At the next slanting half-intersection filth, rubbish and rocks gave him greeting.

Halliday realized fully that they were running him according to some plan. Run he did—what else was there for him? It seemed impossible that the performance could be missed by Daitotei police. Between gasps Halliday supposed that the district was unpoliced at this hour of sleep when even tea-houses were closed and coolies and rickshaw-men were hoveled for the night.

Had Halliday foreseen the result of the chase at the start he undoubtedly would have stood and fought. Now pride of race, courage, everything save only love of life and the desperate rising and falling of aching legs and gulping of air had left him. He no longer saw clearly—the street, the houses, the sky, were a curious red fog, close, encompassing, which sucked at his vigor and blood.

At what alleys decayed matter was hurled at him, at what distance the pursuers were, Halliday no longer knew. He blundered his way, half-running, half-shuffling, gasping, stumbling.

The mob, grown brave at last, dizzied about him like a cloud of wasps. They had in them what wasps have not—voices primed by hatred to whir his last sense mad.

The pack opened their music to the full, a sign to Halliday, had he been able to recognize it, that they were away from any possible Japanese interference. They kept him on the way selected for him, headed him off when he ran toward ultimate safety; they had him at last parallel to the high sea-wall at the southern end of the city of Taihoku.

Round the great wide S the Tamsui makes he battled his blind way, trying for nothing, with wits for nothing, without hope or understanding or thought. He ran, a hunted man, straight before him.

At last the wall sloped down to join the mud of the bank. The Chinese worked him toward the edge of the river.

At this hour of the morning the Tamsui was high—high, broad, and very placid and deserted. No cooking-fires dotted the sampans and junks, no bronzed bodies bent under their burdens, no ducks swam under the eyes of their tenders, no up-river families fought and shouted on the decks of homeward-bound craft. Here and there a silent craft was nosed into the soft mud, asleep like the boatmen.

F'ong-Mui's voice rose shrilly:

"Wait no longer! Now!"

A deeper, more compelling tone—Wah Li:

"Drive him into the water; force him down. There will be no mark on the body, little investigation, and no trouble for any of us. Let him drink his fill of the Tamsui!"

Perhaps the curious husky sound of Wah Li's voice drove Halliday to quicken his pace, perhaps the splash of water up to his body revived his body if not his brain. At all events the harried white man was running with a sudden unexpected burst of strange uncanny speed. He distanced them by yards, stumbled, fell into high tule-like grass, crawled like a snake on his belly, driven by something more elemental than thought. Water touched his face. He came to his knees. Water again was at his chin, his mouth and he tried to stand abruptly, with the jerky movement of one knocked out on his feet. His head came in contact with something sudden as a blow; he threw his arms out, felt with the last touch of reason that one of them touched some rasping material and that his arm burned on the under side clear to the arm-pit— And then it was as if the placid river closed over him, leaving him in cool, pleasant darkness.

THE first thing to waken him to life came like the throbbing of a slow enormous pulse directly under his ear—a great dull buffet of sound like a heartbeat in its regularity and the way it quaked up into his head.

He was, he believed dizzily, waking, and in Japan. It was very cool. He supposed that his boy had forgotten the heavier quilts. Without moving he listened for the cries of the early morning—

"*Daikoyai — kabuya-kabu — moyayamoya-moyayamoya—*"

Then he recognized the booming which had awakened him—the ringing of a great bell in some temple. Its tone was strange, he had never heard the exact note nor the thrumming overtone before. The force of the pounding woke him more fully and a thin beam of yellow light paralyzed his eyes. How many times had he told the boy to keep the *shoji* closed? Or perhaps he was up after that *makie* lacquer the A.-I. home office was always yelling for, and had come without his own boy. That must be it, yes.

His left arm, he discovered, was aching—aching like original sin. It seemed to burn pain clear down into his body.

The next instant he knew where he was—three-quarters immersed in the Tamsui.

His first conscious glance was toward his left side, to the aching arm. It was, he saw without complete understanding, caught to the armpit in a rope, a hawser; he himself was against the hull of a long sampan, or, possibly, a small, stern-pointed junk. For the space of a swallow of rice he thought. Then clarity, reason, was with him.

He heard a thin, childish voice beside him—

"Stay where you are, Oh white man!"

Half-turning, his arm sending shooting pain through his body, he saw the upper part of a pitifully lean brown body, a shock of black hair, a pair of bright brown eyes. Further, he saw that about the child's neck and face was drying blood.

He said weakly—

"What are you—doing here?"

The urchin shrugged a shoulder.

"I wanted life," he said.

Halliday thought that over.

The blood on the boy's face made him partially forget his own torment.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"Hurt? No—cold. Let us not talk so much."

"But," insistently, "you have blood all over."

"It is not mine," the child whispered. "Whose? Who knows? My father's perhaps. My mother's more certainly, since my father ran away. My mother would have run too but she had no time. The Chinese were on us all at once. *I* started to swim, but seeing you when I took water decided that a white man had more sense than a boy and followed your example. I wish the last of the devils would vanish!"

Halliday raised himself a little and slipped his arm from the loose rope. He was able to stand on his feet, his eyes level with the deck of the craft.

"I have brought—trouble," he said wearily. "I don't remember coming—here—"

"We slept," the boy whispered. "Then all at once a million devils were around us. 'White man—where is?' they asked. Since they did not find you and because they were maddened they—well, what happened, happened. My father—that is, the man I call father, since I rightfully have none, I suppose—ran. At least I think he did. My mother, as I said, had no time to run. But I—"

"How is it you speak Japanese?"

The urchin grinned.

"I am a little of this and a little of that," he said. "I am not even certain that the woman was my mother. But I am certain that if the last two of those yellow fiends do not depart, I shall freeze to death, and never be the owner of this boat." He shook his head and laughed softly. "I will be the youngest boatman on the Tamsui. *Hai-ya!* How the girls will look at me!"

With his right arm Halliday supported himself on the rail of the craft, so near the deck that it was no more than an extending plank. He looked to the bank.

Two men were speaking. At their feet, dim in the first light of day, was a prone figure.

"Is that your mother?"

"That? No. Why? My mother they dropped into the river. That is a poor fool of a sing-song girl; she came panting in among the Chinese pleading, like a raw savage, to be taken back to the hills. Well, she will never see them again, although if there is any money about this boat I might buy her for myself." He grinned into Halliday's face. "I can see her now. Along the bank she came when the Chinese were arguing and grunting. One of them ran after her—being a Chinese—and brought her here. Wah Li—if that was his name—said something about the gods first fooling mankind, and then being secondarily kind. I wonder what he meant by that?" Before Halliday could have told him, the imp continued, "He said more, that Wah Li. He said something about all paths leading either apart or together. What do you make of that?"

Halliday could have told him that, also. He wondered if the philosophy of Wah Li could have ever been so justified before. Nausea swept over him and with it he almost fainted. His head came up with a snap as he dimly heard Wah Li say, angrily.

"The white man is dead or he is alive. Either way we will hear about it. Do as you like, F'ong-Mui; I intend taking a boat to Amoy before the sun is very high. And I take this—" stirring the girl with a foot— "with me. Pay? I may pay dearly before the night comes again, if the white man did not drown."

F'ong-Mui—

"It was all for sport—"

"Sport? *Mah!* It was necessary, fool. As I look back, I believe it would have been better to have argued with the white man. He had sense; you have none. Let us go." In a deeper voice, "Stand, O mud-lily!"

The river-rat whispered:

"He kicks her to her feet! A man can learn something from this Wah Li. He has had experience."

A second time Halliday tried to pull himself to the deck of the boat. One arm was not sufficient.

"I will look through the boat once more," F'ong-Mui said. "There may be some corner, some crevice, in which the white rat is hidden."

"They know nothing of me," the boy whispered. "Down in the water, *dannasan*, and keep silent."

The two were apparently taking no chance that the girl might run again. Halliday could feel the boat rise under him three times as three bodies forced the far side down. Whatever the pair said was inaudible. At last after a disgusted spitting into the water they stood with their backs to the water.

The boy of many bloods had crouched against the boat, concealed by the overhang. Twice he hissed to Halliday to do the same but the white man had not changed his position.

"I will be in Amoy. And if you try to write me, F'ong-Mui, I will see to it that your sons, if you have any, will be praying for you! Forget me for a time. When all quiets down—that is if there should be trouble—I will return, and we can discuss the price of the girl then. I am not disposed to pay now."

"That is satisfactory," F'ong-Mui said. "You would naturally not dare to return to your house for the purchase price. I suppose you have some friend who has a boat and who will await your arrival at Amoy before expecting payment."

Wah Li said softly:

"You are triply a fool, F'ong-Mui. I take or accept nothing I can not pay for. I could travel first-class as far as the Tanshan hills if I desired and pay for it also—"

Halliday heard a soft swish and then F'ong-Mui's shrill voice—

"Pay your passage to hell, then!"

The fall of a body shook the boat until it trembled from end to end.

The urchin picked at Halliday's arm, his eyes bright and frightened. His lips moved but he said nothing.

"They will find you in this boat, Wah Li," F'ong-Mui said. "Did you think you would get the girl for nothing? You have called me a fool too many times. Now we are alone. They will find you in the boat with a knife in you I discovered in the cabin, and your friends will say that Wah Li had been a naughty boy and suffered therefor. Yes, some one will go to Amoy with your money, until the trouble is over."

Whatever the dying Wah Li said could not be heard.

"Good," F'ong-Mui said. "I grant it. I let you die alone. Come, girl, you have a boat-trip ahead. And Wah Li has made a wish, a plea, a prayer, and—"

Halliday had his left arm about the rope. He reached up with the right, had F'ong-Mui's leg instantly in the crook of an elbow, the hand doubled around the limb in a feverish grip.

With a splash of the Chinese's body, Halliday let go with both hands. He was in the shimmering drops and the whitened water before F'ong-Mui could even stiffen. Once and twice he smashed at the upturned face, and then F'ong-Mui's knife made a circle that he barely escaped.

The two men were to the waist in water. Halliday had not considered that the other might still have knife in hand; he had not considered anything save that the devil was about to go. What he had done was entirely instinctive.

They faced one another and F'ong-Mui began to grin.

"It is a perfect ending," he said. "We are all here! What more could one ask? I myself—"

Still talking, he tried to leap through the water; Halliday moved nothing more than his body to escape the blow. As F'ong-Mui's knife was at the end of its arc the white man leaned slightly forward, balanced, and drove his fist to the lean jaw of the Oriental.

The half-caste brat screamed, "Hit him more—more—more—" and as F'ong-Mui went limp he waded over and snatched the knife before it sank.

"I have never seen anything like that in my life," he announced, shoving F'ong-Mui out into the current. "One blow—*pow!*—and our courageous F'ong starts on his visit to the gods. *Danna-san*, do you think you could teach me the trick?"

Halliday said:

"Help me out of the water, boy. I can not climb to the deck." Then he added, "Go get F'ong. He isn't dead. I only—"

"Assuredly, assuredly! First—" grinning toward the unconscious F'ong, whose body slipped down under water to reappear thirty feet down the Tamsui—"I get you out—up—a leg so—and *hai-ya!* do you think? F'ong has gone so far that it is impossible to get him! Is it not a shame?"

A very weak voice said:

"Well, white man, you did not die after all. From your appearance you did not miss it by much. Tell me—one thing. F'ong-Mui?"

"He will be in the lower regions before you," the boy told him delightedly.

"You are very—bloodthirsty," Wah Li said. "F'ong-Mui dead. It was—too much to hope for. I called you—a fool, white man. Is that forgiven? There is nothing worse—and I was one myself." His eyes closed. "Candles—torches—fires—suns—moons—stars," he whispered.

He died without further explanation.

"Now we will investigate this money they spoke about," the boy said.

Halliday stopped him.

"The girl—?"

"Ran, of course. She will skirt the river and find the hills. If Wah Li has as much money as I believe I will buy me several to take her place, when I am old enough."

"*Mada!*" Halliday said wearily. "Not yet! Put—him—in the cabin. Do you know an inn, near Hokumongai and close to the flower market, where—"

"I? No. But I know where a *kurumaya* lives. He keeps his cart near his house—if you can call it a house. Shall I get him? He can come to the bank, and then—"

"Get him."

The urchin bobbed his head and ran.

Before he was off the bank he glanced back; then, seeing that Halliday was standing motionless and not stooping over Wah Li, he grinned with satisfaction and ran the faster.

Halliday had not moved when the boy returned.

"He is ready for you, *danna-san*. Will you come now? I will show you the way, and then I will return to the boat. That is, I will come as far as the spot where the *kurumaya* is. Agreed? For—twenty sen, shall we say?"

Halliday climbed slowly into the two-wheeled cart. The half-caste opened his mouth to ask again for the money, closed it with an audible noise and scampered for his boat and its new freight. Yesterday twenty sen would have been fortune. Now suddenly it became a rin on a mound of gold-pieces, a tick on a tick's back.

THE boy must have done a word of explaining to the rickshaw-man. He skirted the Bund first and then by devious ways approached the Japanese quarter, and from it went to the inn near Hokumongai. Policemen glanced curiously at the bedraggled white man whose head hung and whose body seemed limp, asleep. They said nothing, but one of them began to trail the cart.

When it stopped at the inn and Halliday stepped very painfully out, paid the man mechanically—a whole yen too much—and entered the inn, the little officer questioned the *kurumaya*, heard a tale of a night's entertainment and then returned to his post. The *seiyo-jin*, as every one knows, are crazy. It was perfectly possible that this one demanded to have buckets of Nunebeki and water and beer poured over him to wake him up. The white man was uninjured as far as the policeman could see, and had been brought to his own inn. He took the *kurumaya's* number and let it go at that.

Halliday walked slowly through the corridor and to his room. At the door he heard laughing voices, smelled the smoke of good Turkish tobacco, heard the *clack* of a glass to a table-top.

"He's here at last," Halliday heard Jenkins say. "I was afraid he only came in, Jimmy, took one look and then beat it out, intending to get his stuff in the morning—but he stayed! What a story! Old Halliday falling for your tip, and—hello, old horse! Jimmy Warren's on two-months' leave and he came down with me for the boat-trip. We were on the *Rokkume* but didn't let you know. Well—what the deuce, old man! Where've you been?"

Halliday found himself grinning. The past night became dim, hazy, impossible.

"Oh, just around," he said.

The joke was of more importance than any story.

"How you like this fine hotel?" Warren chuckled. "Great little place to be, eh, Bill?"

Halliday looked around. His eye caught the idiotic sign, the spot in the bed where his sweating body had earlier dampened the sheet to a complete outline in the fabric. The wandering cockroach, grown wary in the light of day, was out of sight, but Halliday remembered him. He reached for glass, bottle and syphon.

"It isn't a bad place to spend a night—in Taihoku," he said.

Robert Sallette

BY

R. W. GORDON

WILD tales have come down traditionally of many Revolutionary characters whose lives are little known in the pages of history. They appeared, played a brief part and were gone, but their characters have not been forgotten by the people.

Robert Sallette was one of these. For years his name was a terror to the Tories, whom he hated bitterly. Just who he was, whence his undying hate, and what became of him are matters for conjecture. The French twist to his name has suggested to some that he may have been one of the Arcadians, a number of whom sought to find refuge in the colony after their expulsion from Canada.

Through the Revolution, Sallette carried on his own private but peculiarly effective method of warfare. He appears not to have been regularly attached to any particular command. No one knew just when he would appear or where. Often, it is said, during an engagement he would slip quietly from the American army, penetrate the enemy's lines, and slay single-handed.

On one of these occasions he obtained a British uniform which he put on. In the confusion of the camp he succeeded in approaching a group of officers who had just finished dinner and were engaged in drinking toasts. As they raised their glasses, Sallette drew his sword, cut down two of them, jumped on the nearest horse and escaped safely in a fusilade of shots.

Sallette's ethics were often questionable, but never his bravery. His hatred was that of a fanatic. Whenever for any reason a Tory was liberated it is said that Sallette would slip quietly away, follow, and if possible, kill him.

As a result of the terror he caused, a reward of one hundred guineas was placed on his head. Discovering that the author of the reward was a wealthy Tory farmer, Sallette set out to punish him. He dressed himself in rough country clothes, pulled his hat well down to conceal his face, and proceeded on foot to the farm of his enemy. On his shoulder he carried, carefully wrapped up in an old sack, a pumpkin about the size of a man's head.

Sallette knocked at the door, and when the farmer appeared asked whether the promised reward would be paid promptly.

"With all speed," said the Tory, whose eyes were fixed with satisfaction on the bulging sack, "provided you have brought me the head of that miscreant."

"Count out the money then," said Sallette grimly, "and you shall examine the head, for I swear on my honor I have brought it to you."

In they went. The bag of gold was lifted from its place of concealment and put on the table between them.

"There," said the farmer, "lies the gold."

"And here," said Sallette, jerking off his hat, his eyes blazing, "is the head of Robert Sallette!"

One look was enough. The Tory fled in terror but was brought down by a shot from Sallette, who then quietly pocketed the reward he felt he had honestly earned and made his way back safely through the lines.

Smoky Seas

By CLEMENTS RIPLEY

PROLOGUE

—Mr. Chadwick was thereupon summoned before a committee of the Faculty. Upon Mr. Chadwick's expressing a wish to damn the Faculty his connexion with this Institution was severed.

—FROM THE RECORDS OF HARVARD COLLEGE, 1796.

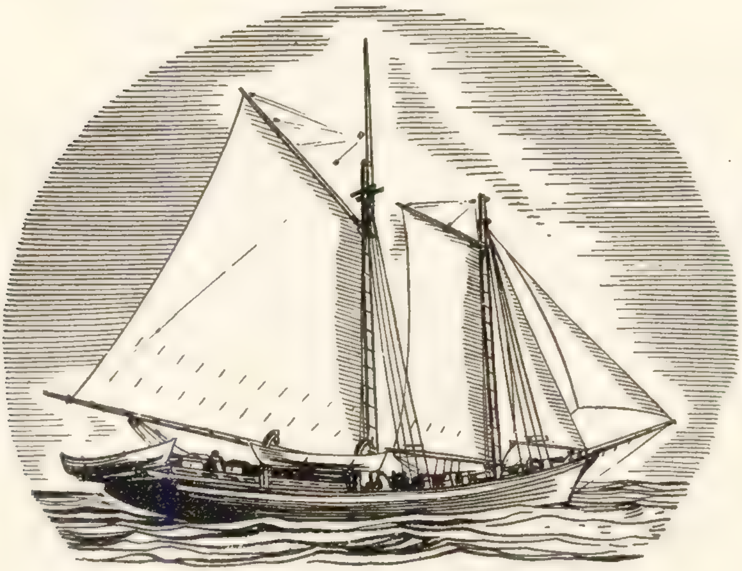
IT IS further recorded, elsewhere, that Mr. Chadwick thereupon fitted out the privateer *Bonnie Mary*, fourteen guns, and presently brought in as a prize the French frigate *Papillon* after a four-hour engagement off Finisterre. The gist of that story was engraved on the side of the large silver punch-bowl, presented by his admiring fellow townsmen, which sat for years in a corner of the dining-room of the Chadwick mansion just opposite Chadwick Wharf in Salem.

He brought in other prizes too—the *Rossignole* and the *Berthe Croisier* and the *Mozambique*, whose model hangs in the Salem museum, and it was he who built the Chadwick Mansion, that "elegant and commodious dwelling" (*vide* the Salem *Gazette*, December 1807) for the housing of his bride, the beautiful Miss Mary Waterman. But the real foundation of the Chadwick fortunes was laid in the years 1812-'13 when British prizes crowded the Chadwick Wharf, and the Chadwick house flag flew wherever there was a wind to carry it or a bit of honest trading to be done by way of cutlass and carronade.

That was the first Peter Chadwick of Salem, and when he left the sea and settled down, making no more than two four-months' voyages a year, his son, Peter Chadwick II, took over the business and filled the warehouses at Chadwick Wharf with silk and spices and rice and tea and the house with queer-smelling sandal fans and lacquer trays and India shawls and ivory chessmen. He ran clipper ships—slim, lovely things of towering canvas with singing crews and driving mates—ran them and brought them home again. And if sometimes there were rumors of queer things done in strange foreign ports half a world away, why, gun-running or picking up a few pearls without too much inquiry as to where they came from or sending a boat ashore at night to pick up the proud but absconding president of a South American republic were not considered anything to make a ridiculous fuss about in that day.

Peter Chadwick III saw the writing on

BEGINNING A THREE-PART STORY



the wall and got out of the shipping business early enough to keep a large portion of the Chadwick estate. Some of it had gone when the glory departed from Salem.

Chadwick Wharf rotted away, spile by spile, and the warehouses with the scent of spice still lingering in their empty dusty corners were torn down eventually to make room for things much less attractive. The Chadwick Mansion, too, now beginning to be known as "that old place opposite the water-front" lost some of the spit-and-polish of an earlier day and the paint scaled off the iron deer on the lawn, relic of a more ingenuous time.

But it was a comfortable old house, and Peter Chadwick III continued to live there on a comfortable income derived from two to four per cent. securities until his death. His wife had died some years before. He left one son, Peter Chadwick IV, and an estate of something like four hundred thousand dollars—which was considerably less than was generally supposed—which his son inherited *in toto.*

CHAPTER I

HEIR OF THE AGES

PETER CHADWICK IV opened his eyes cautiously and took in his surroundings with a rapidly growing distaste. On one side of him was a brick wall and on the other a leprous looking wooden one, evidently built of boards salvaged from some old house, for some were painted and some were not. Above him clouds scudded across a cold gray sky. His head ached and there was a steady throbbing pressure back of his eyeballs. There was a taste in his mouth as of fresh-laid concrete. Presently he got to his feet and staggered off into a corner of the wall.

He felt a little better after that, but he was very weak and empty and his head hurt vilely. In fact he ached all over and when he took an experimental step or two his feet did unexpected things.

There was no particular novelty in the symptoms. For the past six months at least there had been very few mornings when he had not waked with just such a head. But always heretofore there had been some one to turn to—a soft-stepping valet, or at the worst a hotel bell-boy, who would turn on the shower and bring him a pitcher of ice-water and a cocktail and later, when he could bear the thought of it, a cautiously experimental breakfast. The present prospect—two walls, a strip of gray sky, and a pile of unpleasant looking refuse—showed none of these things. Peter Chadwick IV sat down with his back against the brick wall, picked bits of straw and excelsior from his clothes, and thought things over.

A little over a year ago—he was twenty-four then—he had come into his fortune. "Travel in the younger sort is a part of education." He remembered reading that somewhere so he had bought an auxiliary yawl and started out from the Port of Boston to see the world. And there was very little of it he hadn't seen. There had been high spots in London and Paris; white nights at Deauville and Biarritz and Monte Carlo and Var. Marseilles had held him too for a time, after he learned that there were certain sections that the police patrolled in fours.

But Peter Chadwick wanted action, and some one had told him that the East was the place to get it. So East he had drifted, to Cairo and Port Said, which bored him, and out through the Suez and down the East Coast with three men whom he had picked up at Shepheard's and who left him suddenly one night in Cape Town harbor when he discovered that they had been cheating him at bridge.

There were more high spots, plenty of them, at Kowloon and Surabaya and Colombo, and queer deviltry in queer little ports where no known writ runs and a man who goes unarmed is a suspicious character. Things were beginning to look up. There were investments, it seemed, everywhere and good fellows of the utmost friendliness to steer a man into things that would make him a pot of money. He got in on the ground floor of a number of projects—oil wells, coconut plantations, pearling schemes and the like—offered over a card table at the club or at the American Bar early in the morning. Of course it meant pretty well sinking his capital, but obviously they couldn't all fail and if only one should pay out as it promised there wouldn't be anything to worry about.

He was hitting a streak of good luck, too. There was one night when he broke the bank at Macao and sailed out of the harbor with the deck piled high with champagne crates. Of course he sailed back in again the next night and lost it all and twice as much besides—but you can't expect to win all the time.

That was expensive, of course, and so was the ship he chartered to take a crowd on a week's cruise because the yacht was too small. But— "You'll be a long time dead," said Peter Chadwick IV and he sold the yacht in Shanghai to a fatherly tea planter from Ceylon who gave him a fair price and some good advice. He hearkened politely to the advice, for he was a tactful young man and his manners with older people were charming. The money lasted him a good six weeks, during which he did a good many confusing things, most of which he was never able to remember afterward.

That left him with a thousand dollars or so. He would have to borrow something on some of his investments to go on with until one or more of them began to pay, he decided, and he took his various certificates to a very hard-boiled banker at Hong-Kong.

In the half hour that followed he learned a good deal about investments in the Orient. All of it was sound and none of it was pleasant. He arrived on the sidewalk outside the bank a rather chastened and bewildered young man with the banker's last words still ringing in his ears.

"I guess he's right. I'd better go to work," said Peter Chadwick IV sadly, and for the first time in his life, thoughtfully.

But a thousand dollars, as he remarked later when the first shock of the thing had worn off, is a good deal of money after all if you look at it in the right light. With four hundred and fifty of it he bought a ticket to San Francisco; five hundred was in his letter of credit; and the other fifty or so was in his pocket when he went ashore from the *Hong Kong Maru* for one last evening in Yokohama.

He had debated the wisdom of doing even that, for of late he had been learning a certain caution. He had practically decided against it, in fact, when he had an idea.

"After all," he told himself happily, "it's a part of education. If I've spent all I've got in the world on getting educated it's only sound business to get my money's worth. One oughtn't to go around the world and miss seeing Yokahama."

And so, having been careful to learn the sailing hour, he went ashore and found a dance in progress at one of the hotels.

From there his memories of the evening were a little confused. He remembered an affable stranger, who seemed to know him and had offered to show him the toughest dive in Yokohama, and they had gone off together in a cab. But the toughest dive in Yokohama had proved to be disappointing and he had lost the stranger somewhere in a search for a tougher one.

" 'S part 've edge'cation," he recalled insisting to the rickshaw man. "Tough's' dive 'n Yok'hama. Oughtn' come 'roun' whole worl' 'n' missit. You know 's well 's I do oughtn' missit."

Then a sailor had taken him in tow and they had gone to Frisco Joe's Place. He remembered the name because it was an omen—" Frisco Joe—an' I'm goin' San Sfrinsco, see?"

Frisco Joe had turned out to be a Portuguese and the sailor had become quarrelsome and been thrown out, but the place, from the point of view of toughness, was all that could be desired. He had a vague recollection of a gang of sailors with whom he drank Japanese-made Scotch, averring that it had the true flavor of the Orient.

That was the last thing he did remember.

CHAPTER II

ENCOUNTERS

PETER CHADWICK IV stared around him hazily. His forehead puckered with the pain in his head and the effort of recollection. Obviously he must have been very drunk, but how did he get here, and where was here? Probably either crawled out to go to sleep or somebody dragged him out. Therefore, he reasoned, he must be somewhere near Frisco Joe's Place, for he couldn't have come any great distance under his own steam, and certainly no one would take the trouble to carry a man very far and then dump him down in an alley like this. He had a vague feeling that there was something he ought to do right away—something important. He started to shake his head impatiently and stopped with a grimace of pain. The first thing to do was to get a drink.

He picked off a final bit of straw, got to his feet carefully and put his hand in the pocket where he kept his letter of credit.

It was gone.

For a moment he stood quite still, his hand still at his pocket. Then he forgot even his headache in a frantic search through his clothes. The results were dismaying. Not only did he not find the letter of credit, but his watch, his fountain pen, his money, even his cuff-links, were missing too.

He spent a bad two minutes before he remembered. Then he grinned triumphantly. Peter Chadwick IV had learned caution at last.

He remembered now that he had had Frisco Joe cash the last of the letter of credit last night, and that with an access of drunken cunning he had kept only a hundred on his person. The other four hundred he had pushed back across the bar and asked Frisco Joe to keep for him. He even remembered seeing him lock it in his safe.

So that was all right. He took his way, a little unsteadily but very much relieved, around to the front of the building.

Frisco Joe was polishing the bar with a wet rag. Two men leaned against the far end of it, smoking cigars and carrying on a low-voiced conversation. Others lounged at the small tables on the other side of the room.

Chadwick sniffed with a keen disrelish, for the atmosphere was furry with overnight tobacco smoke, leavings and spillings of stale beer, and a general morning-after reek of unwashed bodies and much-breathed air and bad gin. He stepped over to the bar with the idea of getting his money and getting out of doors again as quickly as possible.

Frisco Joe, small and fat and oily, tossed the rag under the bar and looked up inquiringly. Chadwick nodded briefly.

"'Morning. I'll take that money off your hands now. Thanks for keeping it for me."

The Portuguese gave him a blank look.

"Huh?"

"My money—the money I left with you last night." And then, a little impatiently, for the other still looked blank, "I left it with you after you'd cashed my letter of credit. Four hundred dollars or thereabouts. I don't know what it figures in *yen*."

Frisco Joe shook his head.

"Don' know not'ing 'bout it," he declared, and turned to the arrangement of some bottles back of the bar.

Chadwick's temper began to rise. It was incredible that any one could be so stupid, and particularly this morning, when he was in a hurry to get through and out into the open air again. He winced at an especially vicious twinge in his head and schooled himself to patience.

"I came in here last night with a fellow off one of the ships. Later on I asked you to cash my letter of credit—what was left of it—and you did. I took a hundred or so and asked you to keep four hundred for me. You put it in your safe over there, and the letter of credit's there too if you've forgotten. The name on it's Chadwick, Peter Chadwick, and it was issued by Baines and Geltner. You'll find it there if you'll look."

He stopped expectantly, but the proprietor made no move to open the safe. Instead he wagged a dirty forefinger adorned with a large yellow diamond in front of his nose and shook his head violently.

"Never cash' no letter of credit for nobodee," he announced positively. "Never seen no four hundred dollars. Never seen you biffor."

He turned his back deliberately and went on with his arrangement of the bottles.

Chadwick stared at him and his look changed swiftly from astonishment to pure rage. For the moment he even forgot what the money meant to him now. His nostrils flared and there was a white spot at each corner of his mouth.

"Look here—you! I'm not saying anything about my watch and my cuff-links and the rest of the stuff you got. I played the fool with those and maybe I had it coming. But I trusted you with that four hundred—"

Without turning around, Frisco Joe shrugged his fat shoulders and moved off down the room.

"Hold on there!" Chadwick's hand cracked down on the bar. "You come back here, you dirty little rat—"

There was a stir at the tables as men turned to watch. The two who were talking at the other end of the bar stopped and glanced up with a casual curiosity.

Frisco Joe flung out—

"Don' know not'ing' bout it," and went on.

The last time Peter Chadwick had looked like that was the morning he had thrown three men over the rail of his yacht in the harbor at Cape Town because they had cheated him at cards.

He banged on the bar until the glasses rattled.

"Look here—you! I want that four hundred—"

The Portuguese made a peculiar gesture with his hand and waddled out through a swinging door at the end of the bar. A tall, rangy individual in a ragged green sweater got up from one of the tables, slouched over to where Chadwick stood and without a word hit him heavily behind the ear.

Chadwick picked himself up and balanced a moment unsteadily. The room was whirling around him and he saw three of the man in the green sweater. Then his head cleared and he rushed.

The other side-stepped casually and hit him again in almost the same place. This time he clutched at the bar and saved himself from going down.

He hung there a moment, sick and weak. The men at the tables had come over and stood around him in a half circle. They said nothing. Their faces were white masks, expressionless. There was no help there.

He shot a glance at the two at the bar. One leaned an elbow on the rail, a thin-faced man with a drooping yellow mustache and squirrel teeth which he was picking with a match. As Chadwick met his eye he took a half step forward as though to intervene, but his companion pulled him back with a twitch at his sleeve. He was a rather thick-set man, powerful, clean-shaven, with a long, straight nose and high cheek-bones. He drew on his cigar and watched the proceedings with something the dispassionate interest of a man watching a one-sided dog-fight. Both wore the blue serge affected by ships' officers ashore.

The man in the green sweater stood a few feet away, his arms hanging easily at his sides. He watched him critically for a moment.

Then he said, entirely without heat:

" 'Ad enough, I expect, ain't yer? All right—cut yer stick an' get out o' 'ere."

Chadwick let go of the bar and lurched toward him.

This time it was no blind rush. The second blow had cleared his head and taught him caution and he had had a moment's breathing space. He came in slowly and when the man loosed a clumsy swing he ducked it and hit him twice before he could recover.

But they were only taps although he put all his strength into them. He had been sick and weak to begin with and he had just been knocked down twice. For a little he put up a very pretty fight but presently the other, now thoroughly angry, crowded him into a corner, broke down his clever guard by sheer weight, and proceeded to hammer him. He felt his knees going. The white expressionless faces drew in closer—

The next thing Chadwick knew was when he opened his eyes, choking and spluttering, under a drench of cold water. He struggled to sit up and the man with the drooping mustache, who was bending over him nodded and said—

"Ah—you'll do now, guv'ner."

He looked about him hazily. He seemed to be lying on the sidewalk, propped up against the wall of Frisco Joe's Place. Across the street a pair of bare-legged Japanese had paused to watch the scene. Somewhere a window opened, and a woman called out shrilly. The window slammed again. Then he saw the mustached man's companion standing a little to one side. His feet were a little apart and he had a bucket in his hand.

"Feel better?" he inquired, and set the bucket down.

His tone was pleasant enough but it carried no particular sympathy. There was a crisp snap to it, as of a man accustomed to give orders and to have them obeyed. Even the way his lips hardened about his cigar carried a hint of force and decisiveness.

"You're a glutton for punishment," he added. The other echoed admiringly—

"Ain't 'e, though?"

That reminded Chadwick. He got to his feet, holding on by the wall, for the street and the faces of his benefactors still swam before his eyes. He took a couple of faltering steps toward the door.

The man with the squirrel teeth barred his way solicitously.

" 'Ere, guv'ner, what yer tryin' to do? Best keep out o' there."

Chadwick made a feeble effort to push aside the detaining arm. His head swam and he leaned against the wall again.

"Got to go back and get it," he muttered thickly. "The dirty li'l rat—"

"Ah now, guv'ner," the other soothed, "y've 'ad enough for once. Later, maybe—"

"Let me go!" He struggled weakly. "Going back there and—"

" 'Ere, now, no use runnin' a good thing into the ground, is it? Yer'd only get 'urt. Now, guv'ner—"

"You let go of me," Chadwick was shouting furiously. "—— you, let go of me! I'll get—"

"Easy—easy now, myte. Y'aint quite yerself yet, an' that's God's truth. 'Ere, see what 'appens w'en I tyke my arm aw'y? Carn't even stand alone. 'Ere—see?"

He let go. Chadwick lurched forward, caught himself, and then sagged down against the wall, sobbing with pure childish rage, while the other soothed him sympathetically.

"Ah now! Know just 'ow yer feelin', myte—gen'leman like you, too. It's a bleedin' shyme if yer arsk me, but 'e'd fair cut yer to ribbons if you was to go back there the w'y you are. You let me see yer 'ome now—that's the ticket. An' lyter, maybe—"

Chadwick interrupted with a furious outburst.

The thick-set man took his cigar out of his mouth.

"Don't be a —— fool," he said briefly.

Chadwick stopped suddenly and glared at him with rage and surprize.

The thick-set man was unimpressed.

"Better keep out of there," he remarked, and resumed his cigar.

Squirrel-teeth nodded confirmation. "That's sense 'e's talkin', guv'ner." He paused and then asked curiously, "You was s'yin' somethin' abaht 'avin' give Joe four 'undred dollars to keep for yer?"

"I did. I gave it to him last night, and now the dirty little rat claims he never—"

"Ah!" The other wagged his head regretfully. "That 'ud be Joe. But what on earth were you doin' to be in a plyce like Joe's at all, a gen'leman like you?"

Chadwick explained. He was a little calmer now.

"I was drunk, I guess. I got him to cash my letter of credit and I thought it'd be safer to leave it with him 'til I got ready to go to the ship."

He stopped short and an expression of dismay spread over his face.

"Oh, murder! I'll bet anything I've missed it—the *Hong Kong Maru*."

The thick-set man nodded briefly.

"You have. She sailed on the ebb—four o'clock this morning."

Chadwick said weakly:

"Oh, my God! All my luggage—everything. Even my ticket—"

The thick-set man balanced back and forth on his heels and toes, his lips gripping his cigar, and regarded him quizzically. The other pursed his lips.

"Blimey if that ain't too bad. 'Ard lines, that's w'at it is. But you tell me w'ere yer stoppin' an' I'll see yer 'ome, an' after you've 'ad a bit of a warsh—"

Chadwick shook his head.

"I'd better go right to the Oriental Navigation Company offices," he said unhappily. "There must be something they can do. They must have things like this happen sometimes."

"O' course," soothed the other. " 'Eaps o' times. Now you sit right 'ere w'ile I get us a couple o' rickshaws—" he paused to look at his companion, who nodded—"three then, an' we'll go. I'm Cap'n Jem Billiter o' the schooner *Kamloops*, an' this 'ere is Cap'n Morgan Hawke o' the *Bering*. Nah, don't try to get up, guv'ner—there's no need. Just you wyte, quiet-like—"

Chadwick tried to make some acknowledgment, but Hawke cut him short with—

"Oh, that's all right," and the other said:

"Any gen'leman would ha' done the syme. 'Tain't as if you was some larrikin from the docks. Blimey, I know a gen'leman w'en I see one."

He stepped around the corner and came back a moment later with three rickshaws.

" 'Ere we are! Now lemme wipe orf yer fyce a bit. There, that's better—now. Lemme 'elp yer. There! The ride'll do yer good—clear yer 'ead, like."

It did. By the time he reached the spacious offices of the Oriental Navigation Company he was able to get down from the rickshaw and walk into the building, if not strongly, at least without staggering.

He leaned against the counter. An immaculate clerk at the other end of the room was chatting in low tones with another immaculate clerk. In the minutes that followed one or the other cast an occasional supercilious glance in his direction.

It was not the kind of treatment Peter Chadwick IV was accustomed to getting in steamship offices. He rapped peremptorily on the counter.

One of the clerks turned a sleek, bored head and said—

"Hold hard, my man. You'll be attended to at the proper time."

Chadwick opened his mouth to deliver himself of some remarks calculated to bring the clerk on the run, when he caught a reflection of himself in the plate-glass window.

Normally he was a good enough looking young man, a little inclined toward loose-jointed ranginess, with sandy hair, a rather arrogant, slightly beaked nose and a mouth that was wide and humorous. What he saw was a blear-eyed tramp, hatless, hair awry and his shirt-front stained with blood. His gray tweeds were shapeless and wrinkled, eloquent of the fact that they had been slept in, and he had done a very indifferent job of picking the straw off of them. His linkless cuffs flapped disreputably.

He shut his mouth again and waited. Presently one of the clerks rubbed his hands with his handkerchief, stuffed it into his cuff, and strolled over leisurely, adjusting his tie.

He said—

"And now, my man, what is it?"

The shock of that reflection in the window had so wrought on Chadwick that he did not even remember to resent "my man." He said miserably—

"I've missed my boat—the *Hong Kong Maru*. And my ticket was on it, and all my luggage."

The repetition of the words seemed to make it even more final, somehow, and worse.

The clerk sighed patiently:

"Well, we couldn't be blamed for that, could we now? Second or steerage?"

"First!" The clerk looked at him queerly. "I'm Peter Chadwick," he hastened to explain. "You'll find my name on the passenger list—Hong Kong to San Francisco."

The clerk drifted away, consulted a paper, had a long conference with the other clerk.

"There is a Mr. Peter Chadwick on the passenger list," he admitted grudgingly when he came back. He went on, "It's customary in a case like this to issue another ticket for the next boat—that would be the *Shanghai Maru*, Wednesday week." Then, with a glance at the disreputable figure, "We should require some sort of identification of course, er—Mr. Chadwick. Not that there's any doubt, naturally, but our rules, you see. Or a deposit equal to the price of the ticket."

Chadwick felt a cold finger run along his spine at the mention of the word "deposit." He said hastily:

"Couldn't you send a radio to the ship? They could tell you I'm not aboard."

He had formed a scheme a moment ago—to sell the new ticket for enough to pay for a second or third-class passage and leave enough over to keep him in Yokohama until the boat sailed. And now this mud-headed clerk with his identification talk—

"I'm afraid that would hardly do, you know," he was saying. "Our rules. It's a matter of form, of course, but if you are Mr. Chadwick you could easily be identified. Or a deposit of the price of the ticket—refundable at our San Francisco offices—"

"But look here!" Chadwick was beginning to lose his patience. "Who do you expect me to know in Yokohama when I only got in last night?"

The clerk's eyebrows went up slightly. Chadwick cast about him and thought of the two who were waiting outside in plain sight of the window. He glanced out.

"Captain Hawke, of the *Bering*," he began.

The clerk's glance followed his.

"It would have to be some one known to this office," he remarked in a bored tone. "The proprietor of your hotel, perhaps—of a reputable hotel, of course. Or if you had letters? Your letter of credit?"

Chadwick's hand started toward his breast pocket before he remembered. "Well, I—well, I don't happen to have it with me just now. And I'm not staying at a hotel, exactly—"

His voice trailed off. The clerk's brows went higher and his air of wearied patience became more pronounced. "But you must have stayed the night somewhere, mustn't you?"

"Well, I was out pretty late and I didn't bother to go to bed—" he began, and then, in a burst of frankness, "I was drunk," he admitted. "They robbed me down by the docks, and I spent the night in an alley—"

The clerk had been gradually edging toward the end of the counter. Now he murmured—

"Ah—of course in that case—" and drifted away, out of sight.

The other clerk had disappeared too. Chadwick waited. After some minutes he ventured to disturb the tomb-like stillness by rapping, diffidently at first, and then with increasing irritation.

"Hey, you—somebody! Come back here a minute! What's the matter with this place, anyway?" He banged on the counter.

A form appeared, gigantic, clad in the remarkable garments with which British steamship offices and hotels delight to invest their doormen, and bore down on him.

"'Ere, my man, that's no w'y to be'ave. If you've any complyntes—"

"Where's the man who runs this place?" Chadwick demanded furiously.

The other wafted him gently, but with impersonal firmness, toward the door.

"'E's engyged at present. You couldn't possibly see 'im tod'y. If you'll put yer complynte in writin'—"

Chadwick was not thrown out. He could hardly be said to have been put out. But he was out, and the door was closed behind him. He beat on it, and the gigantic doorman came and shook his head warningly on the other side of the glass. He decided that it would be absurd to break it.

"W'at's up, guv'ner?"

He turned, hot and angry, to find his friend of the squirrel teeth hovering solicitously at his elbow.

"The —— fools!" he burst out. "They expect me to know some personal friend of that idiot who can identify me."

"Ah!" said Captain Billiter soothingly. "But then, they prob'ly didn't know 'oo you are, y'see."

"Naturally they didn't—" Chadwick began irritably, and then stopped, caught by something in the other man's tone. "Say, d'you know who I am?" he demanded abruptly.

The squirrel-toothed man smirked all over. He almost wriggled. Chadwick could have sworn he was waiting for a tip.

"Never forget a fyce, guv'ner. D'you recall the night yer bought the Bodega Bar in Penang an' stood free drinks to all comers? An' I've read o' yer, too, in the American Sunday pypers." He turned excitedly to Captain Hawke, who had strolled up in the meantime. "Blimey, you've 'eard of 'im, 'aven't yer—Mr. Peter Chadwick o' Boston an' 'is yacht? Not 'arf!"

Hawke nodded.

"Heard of him," he said. He seemed unimpressed.

The other wagged his head knowingly. "Ah!" he said. "'Oo 'asn't? A reg'lar gen'leman takin' 'is fling like a gen'leman, if you'll excuse me, guv'ner. 'Igh sperrited!" He turned back to the business in hand. "Now w'at's to be done? You'll want to go to an 'otel, o' course—'ave a bit of a warsh-up—breakfast—"

Chadwick came back swiftly to a realization of his position. He shook his head.

"Lord knows I'd like to, but I haven't got any money. You see when that dirty little rat cleaned me out he got my last cent."

For an instant Billiter looked startled. Then he laughed.

"Gaw' blimey, guv'ner, that's a good 'un, that is. Fancy! Mr. Peter Chadwick cleaned out! I s'y it's a lucky thing yer 'appened on a couple o' gen'lemen knows a gen'leman w'en they sees one, eh, Hawke? Why nothin' 'ud give me more pleasure than to oblige yer. 'Ere, now a word, guv'ner—w'at's a couple o' quid between friends? Pay it back at yer leisure, w'en yer funds come in. Lord lumme, I know a gen'leman w'en I see one. An' now w'at d'yer s'y to a spot o' breakfast? The Grand Nippon 's the best."

Chadwick was sorely tempted, but the man had been so spontaneous and forthcoming in his offer that it would have been unthinkable to take advantage of him.

He said:

"That's awfully good of you—but I don't believe you understand quite how it is. I didn't mean that I was just broke for the time being. The four hundred that that crook got was the last cent I had in the world. So you see," he added, with a smile that was intended to be cheerful, "it might be a long time before you got your two quid back."

Billiter stared at him unbelievingly.

"Broke?" he repeated. "You mean y're stony broke? No money at all—anywheres?"

"I'm afraid so. I've got some securities, but they tell me they aren't worth the paper they're written on."

"But—but you was a millionaire! W'at on earth 'ave yer done with it?" His voice rose almost to a scream. "Gaw' blimey, yer carn't 'ave spent it! All that money!"

"Evidently," Chadwick said, "you don't know me." He was beginning to be a little irritated. "Besides, I never was a millionaire."

Billiter's jaw dropped, ludicrously. "But I s'y, look 'ere—carn't yer write to yer bankers or somethin'?"

"You don't seem to understand yet. I haven't any bankers. I haven't anything. Flat broke—cleaned out—*mafisch!*"

For an instant the other continued to stare, incredulous. Then his eyes took on a baleful gleam, and his lips drew away from the squirrel teeth.

"Well, look 'ere, 'oo 's to p'y for the rickshaws then. W'y, Gaw' blimey, yer bloody impostor—"

Morgan Hawke interrupted.

"It looks as if you were stung, Swipes," he said with quiet enjoyment.

"Me?" Billiter roared indignantly! "Me? I s'y, you was in it too—just as much as me. An' yer know it!"

"Not at all." He smiled happily, a quick, broad grin that lit up his impassive features for an instant, and made them almost boyish. "Not at all. You ordered the rickshaws, you know—so you pay for 'em. This was going to be your gold mine."

Billiter's cheeks went purple and a series of white dints appeared in his nose. He glared at Morgan Hawke, balancing on his heels and toes and regarding him humorously over his cigar, and then at the three rickshaw coolies who squatted patiently at the curb a few yards away. Then his eye fell on Chadwick and he took a threatening step toward him.

"Well, Gaw' blimey, I'll 'ave it out o' yer bloody 'ide any'ow! Passin' yerself orf as a millionaire—"

Weak, sick, bewildered by the sudden change of front, Chadwick put up his hands, miserably conscious that in his present condition he had no more chance than a child.

"I'll show yer—" Billiter was beginning, when Hawke stepped between them.

"I'll pay his rickshaw fare," he said unexpectedly. "Here, drop it, Swipes."

The other hesitated. Then he shook his head.

"Ah! Well, that don't satisfy me. 'E 's a bleedin' impostor, passin' 'imself orf for a millionaire, an' I'm goin' to knock seven bells out of 'im."

Hawke made no move to get out of the way. He pulled a coin out of his pocket and flipped it toward him contemptuously.

"I said drop it! You were going to beat him up because you were stuck for his rickshaw fare. Well, there it is. I've bought out your interest in him. Understand?"

He looked at the Englishman steadily, his lips gripping his cigar and his eyes a little narrowed. For a moment Billiter snarled and blustered. Then he dropped his eyes and turned on his heel.

"Ho! I wish yer joy of 'im," he flung over his shoulder and disappeared.

The little, curious knot of bystanders who had gathered melted away. Chadwick said:

"I'm awfully grateful to you, Captain Hawke." He grinned shamefacedly. "I'd honestly hate to have taken another beating this morning. Lord, what a swine!"

The other looked him over speculatively.

"Well, now what?" he asked.

Chadwick frowned.

"I don't know. I suppose I can get some kind of an adjustment out of the steamship people if I wait long enough, but that takes time, and I haven't anything to go on with while I'm waiting."

"I suppose you know the consul would do something for you—keep you from starving 'til he could send you home steerage."

Chadwick looked down.

"I don't know. I'd hate to do that, rather."

"Hm! Well, it looks as though you might have to. On the other hand—what d'you know? What can you do for a living when you get there? Anything?"

"Why, I'd rather thought I'd go into an office somewhere. I've never tried anything of the sort, but I'm certain some of my friends would give me a chance. I might go into the bond business," he added. "I play a good game of golf."

Captain Hawke drew on his cigar thoughtfully. Chadwick said:

"I guess you think I'm pretty hopeless. I don't know much but how to have a good time, and my attempts at making money haven't been brilliantly successful so far."

The other frowned and his lips hardened.

"Well, you came half way 'round the world on a yacht, didn't you? Didn't you even learn ordinary deck seamanship in that time?"

"Why, yes, I've handled her. But I don't see that that helps. You don't expect me to be a common sailor, do you? And I don't see just how you get a license to talk to me that way, if you'll pardon my saying so."

"Don't you? Well, don't forget that I bought out Swipes Billiter's interest in you, and I want to see what I've got."

Chadwick flushed. He said stiffly:

"I'm sorry you troubled. I'll see that you get it back."

"Humph! With your earning power it doesn't look as if I'd get it in any hurry." His forehead creased thoughtfully. "So you think you could go into an office somewhere and make some money. Or sell bonds. Hold on now! Don't go off at half cock." He stopped to take the cigar out of his mouth and inspect the end of it. "Now I've got a job for you, aboard my schooner. Lucky, too, because it seems to be about the only thing you know how to do."

"A job?" Chadwick was surprized, then thoughtful. "You know it would be rather a lark," he said. "Mate of a schooner—"

"Who said anything about mate?"

"But—good Lord, you don't expect me to work as a foremast hand, do you?"

The other ran his eye over him appraisingly, and Chadwick found himself flushing under that impersonal gaze. Then Hawke shook his head.

"Hardly! First place you couldn't stand the work. I pick my men pretty carefully, and you're soft—paunchy. Of course you've got plenty of guts or I wouldn't be fooling with you at all, but I doubt if you know enough for a foremast hand. There's a lot of difference, you'll find, between sailing a yacht in fair weather and running aloft to shift over the fore-gaff topsail in a slant of wind. No, I'll sign you on as a cabin-boy—twenty-five a month and found, and a lay in the catch, though you won't be worth it at first, of course."

At first scornfully incredulous, Chadwick had listened to the last part of the speech with gathering humiliation and anger. As the other finished he turned on his heel.

"You go to ——," he said, and started to walk away.

"Hold on there!"

There was a whip-lash of authority in the tone that stopped him in spite of himself. Before he could start again Hawke made three quick strides and came up with him.

"Just a minute now," he said. "Don't make any mistake about this. When I said I'd bought Billiter's interest in you I meant just that. I paid three dollars Mex, and I'm going to see to it that I get my money's worth. I'm not offering you a job—I'm telling you you've got one."

For an instant Chadwick was dumfounded. Then the absurdity of the thing struck him and he laughed.

"Oh, look here! Are you trying to tell me that I've got to come with you whether I want to or not?"

"Exactly that."

Chadwick drew a long breath.

"Well, by ——, I wish you'd tell me how you think you'd go about it."

"Certainly." Hawke's face was perfectly expressionless. "I'd simply turn you over to that policeman over there—" he jerked his head toward a trim little uniformed Japanese at the corner—"and tell him you were a deserter from my ship. All the shipping officials here know me. Nobody knows you, you look like the worst kind of a beach-comber, and you haven't any money. If necessary I'll get plenty of witnesses off the *Bering* to swear that you joined her in San Francisco. Satisfied?"

Chadwick drew a deep breath and stared into a pair of hard, gray eyes, cold as the sea itself.

"By ——," he said, half to himself, "I believe you would!"

"If you've got any doubt about it, try it and see. But if you want to live happy on board you won't try it. Well?"

He watched him, balancing on his heels and toes, his lips curving around his cigar, gripping it.

Chadwick thought, "I wonder—I believe he means it." There was resentment in his mind, too, and a certain insane desire to show the man that he was mistaken in his judgment of him. He thought, "Well, anyway, I've got to do something, and do it quick."

He said:

"All right, you win. But it's on condition that I go on the pay-roll from this minute."

"Huh?" It was plain that the last condition had surprized him. "What's the idea of that?"

Chadwick grinned at this minor victory. He said insolently:

"Well, don't you feed your crews? I'm hungry. I want breakfast."

But the other was ready for him. "Sir," he corrected gravely, but there was a flash of humor at the back of the gray eyes.

"I want some breakfast—sir," Chadwick amended.

He started cautiously and ended by stuffing himself with ham and pale-looking eggs and wheat cakes. He drank two cups of coffee. He felt better.

Hawke paid the check and led the way outside. He hailed a rickshaw and got in.

"Walk alongside," he ordered. "And don't try to make any breaks. I'd get you before you'd gone a block—and it wouldn't be pleasant for you."

He snapped an order to the rickshaw coolie. The machine started.

"Come on!"

And Peter Chadwick shrugged his shoulders and followed.

CHAPTER III

MR. MAARTENS

THE *Bering* was a scene of feverish activity. Boxes bumped. Barrels and crates banged and clattered. A steady stream of blue-bloused, bare-legged Japanese stevedores trotted up the gang-planks with incredible burdens, and sweating white men, stripped to their grimy undershirts, toiled and grunted and cursed and bawled orders and shot the stuff down the hatchway.

Morgan Hawke ran a practised eye over the welter, got down from his rickshaw, and shouted, "Doctor! Hey, Doctor!"

A blond head, topping a round pair of china-blue eyes, popped out of the galley slide, just aft the mainmast.

"Aye, aye, sir."

Hawke jerked his thumb at Chadwick, who stood by the rickshaw wheels.

"New cabin-boy. Show him his work. Get aboard, you. Cook'll show you what to do."

He turned immediately to the mate, who stood by the gang-plank, a big, unintelligent looking Scandinavian.

"How's she coming, Mr. Maartens? You there, Johnson, —— you, easy with that crate of eggs! Go on, get aboard. What you waiting for?"

Chadwick had hesitated to watch a very small Japanese handle a very large barrel. He started, and picked his way aft through a litter of small boats and cordage, past a group of half a dozen men who lounged and spat and smoked by the port rail—the hunters, he was to learn later, for the *Bering* was bound north to the sealing grounds—and came to the galley.

The cook, fair, moon-faced, stolid, surveyed him placidly.

"Ah — so! We getting cabin-boy. That's good. You peel the spuds."

He indicated a pan of potatoes and a knife, and went back to hacking a lump of beef into raw red cubes. Chadwick took the pan and sat down on a box next the range. His mind was still a little dazed with the rapidity with which things had happened to him.

He had come ashore in Yokohama to all intents and purposes a careless, pleasure-seeking, young man of fortune. Stewards ran about deferentially to anticipate his wants. Policemen tipped their hats. Cab drivers fought for the privilege of having him as a fare. Head-waiters groveled. The yellow-haired girl who had been so delighted to dance with him at the hotel last night, and who would probably have fainted if she had had to spend half an hour beside the humming galley stove on a warm morning, had been quite overpowered at learning that he was the Peter Chadwick IV of Sunday Supplement fame. And the difference between that radiant being Peter Chadwick IV and Pete the cabin-boy of the *Bering*, peeling potatoes for twenty-five a month and a bellyful, was four hundred dollars and a steamer ticket.

The cook looked over his shoulder.

"Better you get busy. And not so thick you make them peelings. That's a waste, so."

He came to with a start and got to work again, but his thoughts ran on. That was absurd of course. After all, he was Peter Chadwick IV. There was a job waiting for him at home, a real job, such as the men with whom he had gone to college worked at. Working in an office—he wouldn't like it at first of course, but as soon as he caught on to the ropes there would be plenty of money, success—

He went off into a vague day-dream of cars and country clubs, golf, getting in to the office and doing something indefinite for a few hours with a dictaphone and push-buttons and a secretary—

"What's matter with you? Sick?"

The cook was staring at him over his shoulder. He found himself holding the knife poised over the pan and realized that he must have been that way for the last five minutes. He dropped it and set the pan down.

"This is a lot of nonsense," he announced, while the cook's eyes went wide with astonishment.

He got up and walked out of the galley and toward the gang-plank, while the other stared after him, speechless.

"You—Pete!"

He paid the voice no attention whatever. He went on. He took three steps, and then something hit him like a cyclone, whirled him around and brought him up with a slam against the rail.

"When I talk to you, you answer—hear? Where were you going?"

"Ashore." He made a futile effort to shake off the hand that gripped his arm.

"Sir!" Hawke thundered.

Chadwick said:

"Oh, forget it. These aren't slavery times. You can't kidnap a white man and make him peel potatoes on your dirty little scow. Get out of my way now."

Morgan Hawke smiled with his mouth, but his eyes were suddenly dangerous. He made no move to let go.

"Now listen," he said, and every word had a slow, deadly emphasis. "You've had one beating today, and I'd rather not give you another one just now. The doctor needs you in the galley, and if I take you in hand it'll be a few days before you'll be able to work. But if you think you can go ashore, or that I can't keep you here you may as well try it and get over the idea once and for all. Now are you going back to your job, or have I got to work on you?"

Chadwick was silent, red, helpless and furious.

"Mr. Maartens!" Hawke called. "This man may try to skip out. Keep your eye on him 'til sailing time, will you."

"Yes, sir."

He turned to Chadwick again.

"Well? Speak up!"

Chadwick looked at the beefy mate, who laughed unpleasantly. He glanced at the grinning hunters. Some of the crew who happened to be near had stopped work long enough to glance at the tableau.

"Well?"

He dropped his shoulders helplessly.

"Yes—sir."

The cook shook his head dubiously.

"Better you are very careful," he told him. "So you are doing your work good, everything is all right, but the Old Man—when he is getting mad he is a terror. That's not so good—no."

Chadwick made no answer. He sat down on the box again and peeled potatoes.

He finished them, and the cook showed him how to make up the staterooms in the cabin. He did the captain's first—a tiny space, scrupulously neat, with a bunk on one side, and a wash-stand, table and chair. Above the table a shelf held a row of books—Shakespeare complete in one volume, odd volumes of Dickens and Thackeray, "Silas Marner," Bowditch's "Navigator," and an almanac. A chronometer and a sextant hung over the bed.

He swept it carefully, made the bed, and went on to the next—the mate's.

It was like the captain's in size, but the resemblance stopped there. As he opened the door the reek of the place hit him like a blow. There were bedclothes gray with grime tumbled on the floor along with odd boots, oilskins and clothing. A couple of the very nasty post-cards made in America for the Japanese trade were pinned up over the wash-stand. There were dead cigar butts in the wash-bowl and there was ample evidence that the mate had been drunk—and sick—the night before.

Chadwick hesitated, swept by a wave of disgust. Then he shut the door again and started toward the companion.

At that moment Maartens appeared, walked to the door and flung it open. He stared from the welter to Chadwick and back again.

"What the ——'s the matter with you?

Didn't the cook tell you to clean my room?"

Chadwick said nothing. The mate glowered at him, his face purpling. He was a big man, with heavy, bulbous features and pale eyes. One corner of his mouth lifted in a sneer.

"Maybe you're too nice for your job. Well, lemme tell you, young feller, you ain't on any millionaire's yacht now. You get in there an' clean that room up—an' clean it right. Un'stand?"

Still Chadwick did not move. He was breathing hard and the telltale white spots showed at the corners of his mouth.

Maartens took a threatening step nearer.

"Jump, —— you, when I give you an order. You hear me?"

Chadwick said—

"If you keep your room like a hog you can wallow in it or clean it up yourself. I won't."

The mate blinked, startled by the unexpectedness of it. Then his fist shot out.

Chadwick had been ready for that. He ducked and countered with a swift left-hander to the chin. The mate took two steps backward and brought up against the companion ladder. He shook his head, dazedly.

Then he charged with a roar and bore Chadwick back with him until his head hit the bulkhead. He clinched and hung on.

They rocked there together for a moment, the mate straining to get an arm loose and threatening slaughter. Chadwick's head swam from the blow against the bulkhead and he felt his hold slipping.

"Here, you! Drop it!"

He jerked his head up. Hawke was standing in the passage by the companion.

"Drop it—you!"

It was the voice of authority. Almost without volition he let go of the mate, who instantly stepped back and loosed a swift upper-cut that just grazed him and plowed a red furrow in his cheek.

Hawke made one spring, the length of the passage, gripped Maartens by one arm and whirled him around. There was a swift sureness about the movement that was appalling.

"Did you hear me, Mister? I said, 'drop it.' Do your fighting on deck."

The mate was purple and breathing heavily. He glared at Chadwick, who was gingerly feeling the place on his cheek."

"I told him to clean out my cabin an' he give me lip, sir," he said hoarsely.

Chadwick said nothing.

The captain glanced in at the open door.

"Did the cook tell you to clean this up?" he asked.

"He told me it was a pigsty," the mate broke in excitedly. "Told me I could—"

"Just a minute, Mister! I'm doing the talking. Did the cook tell you?"

"D'you mean I'm expected to clean up filth like that?"

"Say 'sir' when you speak to me—every time. Now you get in there and clean that cabin quick as the Lord'll let you. And the next time you slack on your work or question an order you'll get your teeth mashed down your throat. Get a bucket and brush and scrub it thoroughly—and air it."

He paused, and then added with a significance that made the mate flush darkly:

"And after this it'll be kept clean or there'll be trouble. Come in here, Mr. Maartens. I want to speak to you."

What took place in that interview Chadwick never learned, but he did learn one thing—that he had gained the enmity of the mate. He was still on his knees with the scrubbing brush when the latter came out and scowled at him as he passed.

"—— skipper's pet," he heard him mutter as he went up the companion.

In a rather chastened frame of mind he fought down a wave of nausea and finished his task. Then he went back to the galley, where the cook showed him a sink full of greasy blackened pots.

He rolled back his sleeves and attacked the pile gingerly. The cold scummy grease set his teeth on edge. It worked in under his nails and when he forgot and put his hand to his face the smell and feel of it made him physically sick. But he managed to clean them, and when the last one was scoured and hung up and the cook nodded and smiled and said, "Ya—so! You catch on pretty good," he was pathetically grateful.

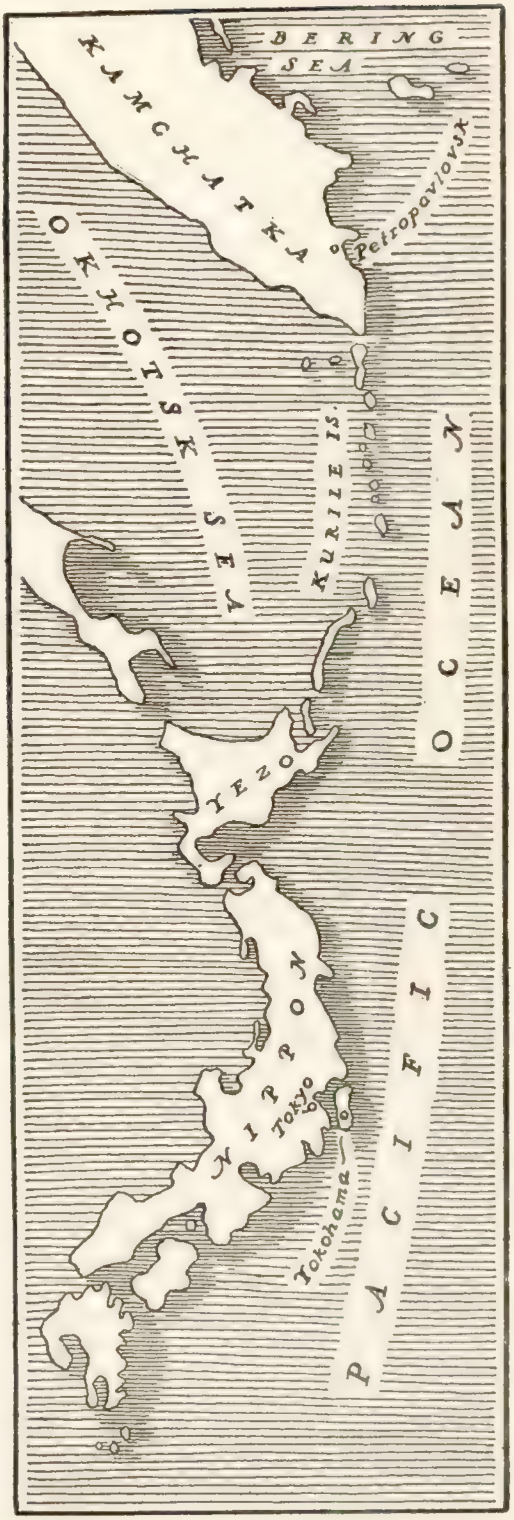
They cast off that afternoon. Chadwick, paddling in greasy dishwater in the galley, heard the long-drawn "Heave—ah! Heave—ah!" and envied the men out there who were hauling on clean rope with the wind in their faces.

That set him to thinking. He wondered vaguely if it would be possible to make a last-minute jump for the wharf. But then what? Suppose he got away and escaped into Yokahama, with no money and no friends? He set himself to thinking about the problem of dinner and a place to sleep, and now these things, which had always been taken for granted heretofore, like darkness at night and light in the morning, assumed new and startling proportions.

He could get a job, he supposed, some kind of job. The unpleasant thought persisted in obtruding itself that a job was what he had now, and that the reason he didn't have a better one was that Morgan Hawke didn't think he was capable of holding it. And Morgan Hawke in his turn was driven by a power higher up—the necessity of making a living.

And then Peter Chadwick IV, with his hands in the dishwater, had a revelation. He saw the world, acrawl with life—men making things, selling things, carrying things, men toiling and sweating and straining, all over the world, to get a job and hold it that they might be fed and clothed and warmed and housed. And the man who couldn't hold the job lost it and lost these things with it, and died.

The whole idea was so startling that he set down the dish he was working on and stepped to the galley slide where he stared at the thick-set figure on the poop. He was seeing him in a totally new light, this man with the hard, gray eyes who stood with his feet apart and drew on his



cigar, unhurried, watchful, swiftly competent to deal with any emergency of the work, this man who controlled the job. And in that moment his feeling was neither admiration nor respect nor fear, but a subtle blending of all three with the terror of hunger and cold and weariness. That man on the poop seemed as powerful, as largely impassive, as impersonal as God.

Then the breeze caught her and with a great flapping of canvas and fluttering of reef-points the sails filled. The last lines were cast off. She heeled a little, quivering all over like a restive horse. The strip of water by the dock widened swiftly. And for better or worse the *Bering* was away and Chadwick was on her.

Three hours later she was dipping easily to the long Pacific swell, quartering across the rollers with Japan a blue streak to leeward, and Chadwick was learning to run down the deck with a pot of tea in one hand and a covered dish in the other.

He served supper in the cabin that night to the captain, the mate, and the hunters. There were five of these—Benton, a tall, drawling Yankee from Cape Cod, with a lantern jaw and high cheekbones; Swift, from the San Francisco water-front, small and dark, quick and catlike in his movements; Jim Peace, a blond, hairy Nova Scotian, and a big silent Swede named Svenson. The fifth, a moon-faced, snub-nosed little man who wore his hair parted in the middle and slicked down and bone-rimmed glasses, and who was known as Preacher, took the watch on deck.

The hunters were a superior class as compared with the crew. They did none of the manual work of handling the schooner and acted as officers when necessary. On the sealing grounds they hunted "on lay"—that is, they received a bonus on the skins taken instead of wages. The crew received regular wages and a small lay in the catch, so that every man aboard had a direct interest in the success of the trip.

The hunters bunked together amidships, and it was here that Chadwick was assigned space as being more easily within call from the galley and the cabin than if he had been in the forecastle.

He came to his bunk at half-past nine, after the last dish was washed and the table cleared and ready for breakfast. It was freshening outside and the *Bering* was lying down to the puffs, her lee rail almost awash. The hunters lounged in the confined space, sprawling on their bunks or at the table, overhauling their gear, loafing or occasionally joining in the endless, shouting argument between Benton and Swift as to whether a Tyee salmon comes back to the pool where it was hatched to spawn. The place reeked with a hundred smells. The air was foggy with smoke and the sea-lamps swayed and swung with their fish-tail flames a sickly blue. Slickers and oilskins hung against the wall and threshed and swished with every roll, and a pair of sea-boots thumped out an endless steady rhythm.

Chadwick coiled himself down on a lumpy straw mattress and meditated on the change in his fortunes to the accompaniment of the rush of seas, the occasional clatter of feet on the deck overhead, the sweep of the wind, and the creak and strain of cordage, while timbers shivered and groaned and the hunters argued with shoutings and table-poundings and monotonous blasphemy. It was hard to believe that he had ever been Peter Chadwick IV with money and leisure and soft-footed people to wait on him. That was some queer, extravagant dream. The reality was work and cold and hunger—the life of Pete, the cabin-boy.

And presently even this softened and blurred into drowsiness and he slept.

CHAPTER IV

A CAN OF TOBACCO

THE cook woke him at five. He pulled on his clothes and came on deck, rubbing the sleep from his eyes to find a gray morning of steely white-flecked sea and scudding clouds. The

Bering was toiling up the long slopes, hanging an instant as her bowsprit fell and running down to bring up short in the next wave with a *wop* and a dash of spray over her bluff bows. She was built for steadiness rather than speed, he decided, about ninety feet over all, broad in the beam and stubby. Somehow she made him think of Mrs. Toomey, his washerwoman at college. There was a gusty sigh about the way she took the larger seas. His yacht would have run away from her like a greyhound from a pug, but—he glanced aloft—he would have hesitated a long time before carrying the press of sail that was making every rope aboard sing like a violin string.

"Hey! You there! What the —— d'you think this is? A rest cure? Get in there an' get busy."

For the moment he had almost forgotten that he was Pete, the cabin-boy, in the fascination of watching the seas hiss along the rail as the *Bering* heeled to the puffs. He started up and saw the mate on the poop, his heavy face gray in the dawn.

"Too good to work, are you? Well just make up your mind to have that taken out of you on this ship. Jump now!"

Chadwick flushed, but he was learning. He bit back the retort on the tip of his tongue, said, "Yes, sir," and was just about to go into the galley when the mate called him back.

"You—whatever your name is—if you don't know how to answer an officer you better learn right now. When I give you an order, you say, 'Aye, aye, sir' an' say it quick if you don't want a sock in the jaw. Say it!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"By —— you better remember that. Now step lively."

The cook put him to work until it was time to lay the cabin table with the storm racks, and presently he learned the difference betwen being served with a meal by a cat-footed steward in the comfortable dining-room of his yacht and serving one to six men in the cramped cabin of the *Bering* while the little schooner pitched and bucked and climbed her way through the gray seas. The wind had shifted a point or so since he came on deck, and more than once as he made the trip between the galley and the cabin he was caught and drenched by a torrent of stinging spray.

Long before breakfast was over he was as thoroughly soaked as if he had been overside—but there was no chance for a rub-down and dry clothes even if he had had anything to change to. He cleared the table, made up the staterooms, and dried out as best he could while he was cleaning the breakfast dishes by the galley stove.

Until nine at night he scoured pots and pans, swept, swabbed, peeled potatoes, served meals and ran errands, everybody's errands. By the time the day was over he was tired with a complete weariness that he had never known before in his life. And more deadening than the drag at his muscles was the endless vista of such days that stretched before him. He had lived a far from sedentary life. Polo is strenuous and so is boxing, and carrying a pack or portaging a canoe is trying both to muscles and temper. But for the first time Peter Chadwick was doing work that had no element of play in it, spending his time at some one else's command and doing things that had no thrill or excitement in them—dirty, disagreeable things that up to now had been unobtrusively done for him by some one else—in short, earning his living.

And he was doing it for men whom a week ago he would have lumped under the uninterested title of "inferiors." He was learning hard. A dozen times that first day he had to sweat his temper and return a brisk, "Aye, aye, sir," to a command that was flung at him like an insult, when what he yearned to do was to lash out and hit somebody on the jaw. And toward the end of the day there were minutes when he would have given ten years of his life for ten minutes' rest. Work, just ordinary work, was beginning to take form for him as an insatiable monster, terrible, malignant. He was beginning, too, to conceive a curious respect for the men who did it, who gave their sweat and muscle, dollar's worth for dollar's worth, to the making of a living.

The cook was one of the first to win a generous measure of this respect, and a great deal of liking. He was a round-faced, cheerful German named August, commonly abbreviated aboard the *Bering* to 'Goost. He showed Chadwick photographs of his mother and sisters in Hamburg—a patient-looking German *hausfrau* and two fat, solemn little girls with flaxen pigtails. This was his second trip with the *Bering*.

"So you are doing your work good you get on fine with the Old Man," he told Chadwick. "And so clean he keeps his ship, yes. Always the scrubbing, the sanding, the scouring. I like that. It's healthy so."

From him Chadwick learned that the *Bering* was one of the San Francisco fleet which drove every spring for the sealing in the foggy seas above the Aleutian Islands. She had come into Yokohama for stores and to unload her first-of-the-season skins.

It was in Yokohama that Chadwick's predecessor had left.

"Dirty—*pfui!* That's Otto," 'Goost explained. "Always he keeps the dishes dirty. Always when the Old Man is coming by the table is dirty dishes. He is speaking 'bout that two-three time. Also he is breaking Otto's jaw the day we land. So Otto, he is running away also and then you come. And that's good, yes," he finished with a smile.

'Goost's kindliness and patience with his inexperience did a great deal to make life bearable in those first few days aboard the *Bering*. Cleanness was the cook's gospel, and Chadwick began to discover that he himself had a natural aptitude for spit-and-polish which went far toward establishing him in the latter's good graces.

He had, too, a natural ability to please people of all sorts. Oscaar Tollgren, a smiling little Norwegian from the forecastle, liked him at once and made a habit of dropping into the galley for a yarn.

Oscaar was a man of forty or so with a broken nose and a face that showed the scars of a hundred battles, but his grin stretched from ear to ear and his voice was a continual surprize—high-pitched and as gentle as a woman's. One day he showed Chadwick his hands, with the knuckles battered and smashed from fighting.

He had been fourteen, he told him, when he had shipped as a cabin-boy on his uncle's fishing boat, out of Stavanger. He had deserted in Holland and slept that night in a field under a hay-stack. In the morning he had found a couple of Dutch farmers standing over him prepared to prod him with pitchforks, and although he spoke no Dutch it was not hard to divine that their intentions were hostile. Oscaar had leaned over in the straw, pretending to have lost some money there, and the farmers had promptly begun to search on their own account.

"So ay kick 'em in t'e face wit' my heavy sea-boot an' ron down t'e road," he finished gently.

He had been a gun-runner during the Russo-Japanese war and a pearl-poacher in the Paumotas, and had narrowly escaped the salt-mines on one occasion when a Russian cruiser had overhauled the sealer *Tyee* in the forbidden ground off Kamchatka and all that had saved them had been a providential breakdown of her engines.

"T'at bane locky t'ing for us," he grinned happily. "Bot t'is Morgan Hawke, he iss different. T'ey aint getting him, ay bet yu. He bane smart, t'at faller. T'ree, four trip ay am sailing wit' him now, an' ever' time he iss getting hes ship full Rossian skin. T'at's makin' big pay-day, yu bet."

"You mean he poaches in Russian waters?" Chadwick felt a quick thrill that was not all apprehension. "Say, what would happen if they caught us?"

The little Norwegian grinned and made a swift, expressive gesture. Chadwick glanced at 'Goost, who nodded confirmation.

"The salt-mine," he said placidly. "That is not so good—no."

"But, look here! He can't compel us to do anything illegal. I know enough law to know that."

Oscaar shrugged. "What yu gon' do 'bout it, huh? When t'e Ol' Man iss eating hees seegar—like t'at—t'at mean we getting in t'ose Rossia water. He ain' gon' tal yu, bot me, ay know. An' yu wan' luke out t'en. He's bad faller if yu doing somet'ing make him mad. Two-t'ree trip ago was mate, faller by name Purrum, was giving t'e Ol' Man lip 'bout he ain' signed on for no trip to salt-mine. Hm! Ol' Man iss bosting him two-t'ree rib t'at time, by ——!"

It gave Chadwick something to think about.

The Old Man, it developed, was Oscaar's particular fetish, but like most of the crew he had a low opinion of Maartens, the mate.

"T'at faller got big head," he explained, "so big. Las' trip he iss boat-steerer, yust like me. T'at's awright. Only now he iss mate he t'ink he got to kick always t'e crew around."

He grinned shyly, and showed Chadwick his sheath-knife, with two notches on the back of the blade.

"T'at's locky knife," he explained. "When ay'm getting nine notch like t'at, maybe ay'm finding million dollar." He put the knife up, and said, apropos of nothing, "Me, ay don't like t'at mate."

It was a feeling Chadwick shared and not many hours later an incident occurred that strengthened it.

Pawlet, a fresh-faced, awkward country boy, who was making his first trip in a sealer, was doing some painting by the galley. He had set the paint-pot down on deck and Maartens, coming around the corner unexpectedly, happened to kick it over.

Instantly he turned on the boy with a torrent of abuse, and Pawlet, who had been going on with his work all unconscious of the catastrophe, turned, startled, just in time to graze the mate's trousers with his brush.

It was hardly enough to be called a spot, and the trousers were old, but Pawlet went white as he saw the look on the mate's face.

"I—I'm sorry, sir," he stammered. "I didn't mean to, sir. I'll clean it up and it won't happen again."

"You're —— right you'll clean it up," Maartens bellowed. "I'll teach you to play tricks like that! And you wont think it's so —— funny either," he roared as the boy's face twitched nervously. "Wipe that grin off your face."

"I—I'm sorry, sir. I wasn't grinning—that is—"

"Try to talk back to me, will you?"

Without the lightest warning his fist crashed into the boy's unprotected face. The thing was pure brutality, done without any attempt at excuse beyond a muttered, "Teach you to leave things 'round on deck, —— you," as Pawlet crumpled into the scuppers.

Maartens swaggered aft to the poop. Chadwick, tense with sudden rage—he had come out of the galley just in time to see the blow—shot a glance at Hawke, who leaned an elbow on the top of the cabin and regarded the scene impassively.

The captain met his look with a level, abstracted gaze that hardly seemed to see him and yet carried a note of warning. Chadwick hesitated, glaring at the mate's back. Then he shrugged and bent over the unconscious boy.

Maartens saw it.

"Hey, you! What the —— are you up to?"

Chadwick looked up just in time to catch a glance that passed from Hawke to the mate. The latter was suddenly silent.

The captain's lips tightened around his cigar. He said:

"Heave a bucket of water over him and then go for'ard and send a man back to clean up the mess. Come below a minute, Mr. Maartens. I've got something I want to talk over with you."

Chadwick carried his instructions farther. He dragged Pawlet into the galley, where 'Goost shook his head and clucked pityingly over him, and the two of them brought him to. A little later the boy staggered forward, sobbing with pain and rage and holding his bleeding face in his hands.

Chadwick's eyes were still blazing and his nostrils flared.

"If I ever get a chance at that dirty dog—" he said.

'Goost shook his head warningly.

"He don't like you already," he told him. "I seen how he looked at you when you was bringing that poor feller in here. Better you keep out from his way—so. Then maybe he ain't doing you nothing at all."

Chadwick told him about the incident in the cabin the day he came aboard. It was the first time he had spoken of it to any one. 'Goost's placid face was troubled.

"That is not so good, no. I think maybe he is making trouble for you yet. You keep out from his way and maybe he forgets you."

Chadwick shrugged.

"I can take care of myself," he said, and 'Goost shook his head unhappily.

"He's going to make you trouble yet," he prophesied.

Others on the ship seemed to share the opinion. Oscaar Tollgren spoke of it when he dropped into the galley that afternoon, and patted the knife with the two notches on the blade.

"An' when she's getting nine maybe I'm finding million dollar," he added without suggesting in any way that it referred to the impending quarrel.

But Chadwick understood and shook his head.

"That's nice of you, Oscaar, but it wouldn't do. It isn't my way, you see."

The little Norwegian grinned and threw out his hands, palm up in a gesture that said there was no use arguing with a man like that.

"Aw-right. When ay am getting million dollar ay buy you pair brass knuckles maybe."

Pawlet came into the galley just before supper, with his mouth swollen and the bridge of his nose covered with surgeon's tape. He stammered, and his eyes were blazing with excitement.

"Look—looka here! You know what they're sayin! Well, if he touches you he's got to lick me too. Th'—th' two of us could kill him—"

Chadwick put his hand on his shoulder.

"You keep out of this, kid," he told him, gruffly but kindly. "His row with me hasn't anything to do with you, and you won't help by mixing in. I can handle him."

The confidence in his tone was far from assumed. It was not that he had any doubts about the mate's feeling regarding him—he had had too many sour looks from him in the past few hours to make any mistake there—but having seen him in action he was fairly certain that he would be an easy mark for a man who had held the intercollegiate middle-weight championship. Given plenty of room he had no doubt of his own ability to step around him and cut him to ribbons, and he had every intention of doing it.

Animosities ripen fast on a ninety-foot schooner, and his chance came even sooner than he had expected—the next afternoon, in fact. Maartens was standing by the wheel when Chadwick came out of the galley with a pan of ashes to empty over the rail.

He was within a step or two of the lee rail when the mate bawled—

"You there!"

Chadwick stopped and looked up at him, his pulse going a little quicker. It was the first time the other had spoken to him since the Pawlet incident.

"Go down to my cabin and find a can of tobacco and bring it up here. Lively now."

"Aye, aye, sir. Where is it?"

"I told you to find it, —— you. More speed and less lip."

Chadwick stepped to the rail and flung the ashes over. Then he turned to execute the order—on the run, for he was going to leave the other no chance of complaining of his work. But before he reached the cabin companion the mate strode to the break of the poop, his face dark.

"Did you hear me?" he shouted. "When I give you an order you drop whatever you're doing and jump—un'stand?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Chadwick's nostrils twitched and his lips were pressed together, but there was nothing exceptionable in his tone. He took care of that.

But Maartens had not finished.

"I don't know what kind of a millionaire you used to be," he sneered, "but if you think you're too good to take my orders you're going to have that notion knocked out of you, and quick, too! Now get down there and find that tobacco! Jump!"

Chadwick held himself in check and trotted down the ladder. He found the can on the bunk under a fold of a blanket. He had a half-formed suspicion that the mate had left it there on purpose to humiliate him, but his manner as he brought it up gave no hint of what he felt.

The mate took it without a word, and Chadwick was half-way to the galley when there was a wrathful explosion behind him.

"You, there! Come back here!"

He turned again to find the other with the can in his hand, peering into it.

"—— you, have you been dipping into my tobacco?"

"No, sir," said Chadwick quietly.

One or two of the crew whose work had happened to take them aft glanced covertly at them, and the hunters lounging by the weather rail stopped their talk to stare curiously. Under their eyes the mate was deliberately working himself into a passion.

"Well, by ——," he yelled, "we'll see about this. It's bad enough having a thieving cabin-boy without having your —— greasy fingers pawing over my tobacco. I've got a —— good mind to teach you a lesson right now! An' this time you haven't got the skipper to pet you up and save your hide either."

Chadwick said very quietly—

"I didn't take your tobacco, sir."

Maartens thrust the tin in his face.

"Well, look at it," he shouted. "I left it half full. What d'you make of that? Speak up."

The younger man drew a long breath.

"That you are either mistaken, sir," he said slowly, "or—what I think is more likely—that you are a cheap and very nasty liar."

There was no more spluttering. With a roar the mate drove down at him from the poop.

Chadwick stepped aside and hit him under the ribs as he went by. The mate whirled and came in again, his arms flailing, and Chadwick thought, "This is going to be a joke," and stepped in, hit Maartens twice, and stepped out again before the other could get his guard up.

The hunters lined the rail grinning. Chadwick ducked in and out, jabbing and feinting, while Maartens chased him like a bewildered angry bull, trying to crowd him into a corner. Chadwick was hitting him pretty much as he pleased, and the mate's face was beginning to tell the tale. His lip was cut and bleeding and one eye looked puffy before he began to learn caution and cover up.

Chadwick smiled at the clumsy guard, feinted with his right for the body and crossed his left to the already injured eye. It was easier than he had had any idea it would be. He had the mate exactly where he wanted him, and there was a score to settle. He jabbed the eye again.

"That," he explained pleasantly, "is for Pawlet. I'm going to close that eye and close it right as a memorial to him."

"If I ever hit you—once—" the mate gasped.

"Ah—but I couldn't allow that, you see."

The thing went on, minute by minute. It was amazing the amount of punishment the man could take. Chadwick danced in and out landing light blows wherever he pleased until even he was forced to a grudging respect for the animal courage that kept the other coming on. He began to be a little sick of the brutality of it, too. There was a streak of blood running down the mate's chin, and his eye was nearly closed. His whole face was skinned and cut. Even the hunters had begun to be a little tired of the performance, although the faces of those of the crew who could invent duties that took them near enough to watch were alight with covert glee.

He decided to end it, and dropped his right and feinted with his left, leaving an opening that a child could not have failed to seize upon. Nor did the mate. His fist shot over, and as it did Chadwick stepped in and drove his right with his body behind it exactly to the left of the point of the jaw.

Maartens' head snapped up and he took two staggering steps backward. A dazed look came into his one good eye. He blinked and shook his head. And then he covered up and bored in again.

Chadwick gasped and fell back a step. That blow should have dropped the man in his tracks. He maneuvered for another opening, and for the first time he felt a twinge of uneasiness.

The mate showed one effect of it—he was fighting more cautiously now, if he could be said to be fighting at all. He was covering up, and feint and shift as he would Chadwick could never seem to reach a vital spot.

And all the while Maartens bored in, steadily trying to work his lighter, faster opponent toward the corners at the break of the poop. Again and again Chadwick dodged, danced out of his way, jabbed him in the ribs, hit him more or less as he pleased—and still he came on.

Chadwick began to be worried. His high living was telling on him now. His breath came in jerky gasps and his mouth felt as if it were full of cotton. Once in a desperate attempt to end it he stood toe to toe with Maartens, hitting with both hands until the heavier man pushed him dangerously near a corner. He got out of that at the price of a split lip and a short-arm jolt in the jaw that made his head swim. He saw that the faces of the hunters after that were neither grinning nor bored, but strained, wolf-like, waiting for the end.

There came a time when he could no longer lift his hands, and his foot-work was a staggering stumble, when he stood clear on the deck at last with his arms at his sides, stiffening his knees to hold him up by sheer will-power. Then he saw the mate's fist start at his hip and come up in a long curve. He was almost thankful. Yet it came so slowly that it seemed absurd not to be able to shift his head a little—just a little—

There was a crash and his head snapped back in a shower of sparks. He lay face-up on the deck and saw the clouds scudding overhead. The mate was standing over him, one eye closed, his face like a slab of raw meat. His voice came from a long way off—

"Well, —— you, that'll teach you."

He knew what he wanted to say, but the muscles of his throat seemed to be paralyzed. When it came it was a whisper, so low that the other had to stoop to catch it.

"If you say I took your tobacco you're a liar."

Then the mate kicked him into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER V

AN INTERLUDE

IT WAS three days before he was able to drag himself out of his bunk amidships and out on deck to find the *Bering* riding easily over a sparkling sea under a blue sky. He drew a long breath and felt better.

The deck was deserted except for the mate. He leaned against the mainmast and his face, a mass of unhealed cuts and bruises, twisted in a sneer as he passed on his way to the galley. Captain Hawke, himself at the wheel, gave him an appraising glance and a brief nod.

"Well, you had to have it. Know better

another time. Glad you're about again because we're short-handed."

But in the galley 'Goost clucked sympathetically over him and found him a box to sit on. He was glad to sit down. Even the short trip from amidships had made his head swim, and his body ached in unexpected places. He touched the lump on the side of his jaw with experimental fingers and asked:

"Where's everybody?"

"They are hunting." The cook indicated the galley slide with a sidewise nod. "We come last night on the seal herd, yes."

Chadwick looked. Abreast of the *Bering* and to windward, the nearest a mile or so away, five small boats spread in a fan that swept the sea ahead of them. The last one was just visible on the ocean's rim. As he watched a tiny puff floated up from the bows of one and presently he saw her crew haul something inboard.

The air was good, and it was good too to be up and moving about again. He felt better every minute. After a little he took a pan of potatoes and began to peel them in spite of the cook's expostulation.

"You will make yourself sick again, yes. I told you was not so good for you the mate, and look now how he makes with you," he grumbled. "Also the next time he kills you maybe, and then I must peel always the spuds myself. *Dummkopf!*"

At the reference to the mate Chadwick's face darkened.

"The next time something's going to happen to him so quick he won't know what hit him," he promised.

That resolve had crystallized in the two days when he lay feverish, aching, half-conscious on his lumpy bunk amidships. To whip the mate had become more than an ambition with him; it was a life-purpose, an obsession. In all his life Chadwick had never before had a really definite goal. If he had wanted anything either the wish had been immediately gratified or, if it was impossible of gratification, he had forthwith forgotten it and gone on to something else. But here was something to live for—to whip the mate, to do it so thoroughly, so efficiently, that Maartens would remember it all the rest of his days.

It was not hate that moved him, or revenge. A careful analysis of his motives told him that. He disliked the man, naturally, but no more than he had disliked other men at various times. He had more respect for him than for the man Billiter who had wanted to thrash him in Yokohama. The mate was a brute but he was no coward. No, this was a job, a piece of work that was laid out for him, to be gone about carefully and conscientiously. It was a matter of self-respect. He had been over the last fight, blow by blow, a hundred times, and he knew just what was going to happen in the next one.

'Goost banged a pot on to the stove and scolded in thunderous German.

"*Donnerwetter noch einmal—dummer Esel was du bist! Herr Gott*, always such a *Schweinkopf* for a cabin-boy they are giving me. So! Otto, he is leaving dirty the dishes and getting a *Schlag* in the jaw, and you must be fighting the mate. *Pfui!*"

'Goost grumbled and growled and dressed his hurts with hands as gentle as a woman's. The sun touched the ocean's rim and the little boats hoisted their spritsails and began to come in.. Chadwick followed 'Goost out on deck when the first came in. No one had told him to, but he was feeling better now and any trick of seamanship interested him.

Preacher was in the bow with Johnson rowing, and a lithe, vivid little Italian, Spinelli, handled the steering oar. As they came alongside the skipper put the wheel over and the *Bering* came up with a low thunder of shaking canvas. 'Goost passed the tackles and Preacher and Spinelli made them fast. Then, waiting their chance, the three scrambled aboard and the boat was hoisted and lashed bottom up on deck.

They had four seal—a fair catch, Chadwick was told. They were pretty things, even dead as they were, brown and sleek with large gentle eyes.

After that Chadwick helped 'Goost with the tackles while Preacher went below to clean his gun and Johnson and Spinelli handled the fore and main sheets. Maartens was already in the bow taking care of the headsails.

Chadwick served supper in the cabin that night and afterward helped with the skinning and salting, a gristly task when the decks were slippery with grease and blubber and the scuppers ran red and the blood-splashed crew hurried from pile to pile, their flensing knives in their hands, ripping and slashing and salting and stowing under the quiet moon.

Maartens directed the work, but beyond an occasional—

"Hey, you! Snap into it there," or a half-veiled sneer at "these lily-handed skipper's pets" he made no attempt to force another clash.

The unfortunate Pawlet came in for more trouble, however. He was carrying the carcass of a small seal to the rail to throw it over when he slipped on a piece of blubber and collided heavily with the mate. Maartens picked himself up with an oath, and as the boy bent to recover the seal carcass he kicked him. Pawlet went down again, and staggered up, his face sick with pain. He hesitated and took a step forward, and Maartens swung his foot back again.

At that instant Oscaar shouldered his way between them. It was done as if by accident and he said nothing, but his hand was on the knife at his hip, and his eyes were on the mate's.

Maartens said—

"Look where you're going another time, —— you," and turned away.

CHAPTER VI

STORM

BUT though Maartens made no effort to force trouble it was plain to every one that there was a tension there that would sometime snap. Chadwick was something of a hero with the crew since his battle. More than one of them put his head in at the galley door at one time or another to pass the time of day and wish him good luck, and even the hunters occasionally included him in some 'midships conversation. Pawlet openly worshiped him, and O'Connor, a long Galway Irishman, offered him two dollars to teach him the blow that had staggered the mate. "Sure, if I could do that I'd be a mate meself," was the reason he gave.

Then fat, bald Peterson, who was a deep-water sailor and affected to despise sealers and sealing, insisted on spending hours in trying to teach him square sennit. All of which tended to make him less popular with Maartens than ever, and the mate never missed a chance now to throw extra work on him, sneer at his manner of doing it, find or make dirty jobs to put him at, and generally make life unpleasant for him.

Chadwick took it all stoically. He was biding his time, hardening his muscles, sweating out the cocktails and champagne, and waiting for the other to take the offensive. He was determined that come what might he would give him no chance to say he had been insubordinate or refused duty.

THE sea was like glass and the air was heavy and sultry. The boats were out, and since the *Bering* was practically becalmed they were farther away than usual. From time to time 'Goost put his head out of the galley to scan the gathering cloud bank to the east, and each time his face was more troubled.

"She's goin' to blow sure," he predicted. "And with the boats out that's not so good, no."

A moment later they heard Captain Hawke call to the mate.

"Lay aloft, Mr. Maartens, and spread the topsails. She's coming out of the east and we'll need everything we've got if we're going to run down on those boats before she hits us. Then get down and stand by to handle the foresheet. Have

Pete handle the headsails. The doctor and I'll take care of the mainsail. Stand by to jibe over on the first puff."

Before the mate could relay the order Chadwick had started forward, but not too soon to escape the volley of profanity that followed him down the deck. He took his stand by the headsails and waited.

The dark line on the water to the eastward moved nearer. Little fugitive breezes from no particular direction began to play around them. The mate finished with the topsails and came forward to the foresheet.

"Back 'em over when I give you the word," he shouted, "and lively if you don't want a bat in the jaw."

For an instant Chadwick's temper got the better of him.

"You bat me," he retorted between set teeth, "and —— help you."

The mate hesitated and took a half-step toward him. At that instant there was a shout of "Stand by! Here she comes," and the puff swept them.

Chadwick went at his task of backing the headsails over as the schooner swung around. It was lively work with the wind freshening gustily and three threshing sails to handle, but he did it quickly and well. Nevertheless the mate took occasion to bawl:

"Lively, you Port Mahon sodger! Where the —— did you learn seamanship—on a canal boat?"

This time he sweated his temper and said nothing, but as the *Bering* tore through seas white under the lash of the squall, he sensed that the tension between them was at the breaking point. It was only the necessity of the moment that kept them from flying at each other's throats.

And so for a long twenty minutes they stood there, hardly more than a boat's length apart, the mate flushed and scowling, Chadwick white, his nostrils quivering and his eyes blazing, while the schooner scudded before the wind toward where the first of the boats tossed perilously, its crew bailing for their lives.

They whirled past, astern of her. He heard the skipper's shout, faint and far away—

"Stand by to heave to!"

And then everything broke loose at once.

The *Bering* heeled swiftly and rushed around into the wind, and as she did the full force of the squall hit them. There were two cracks like the reports of a field gun and the topsails whirled off into the scud to leeward. Chadwick sprang to the jib sheet just as the storm took them abeam.

Then a wall of water rose high above his head and he leaped for the pin-rail at the foot of the foremast as the mate crashed into it from the other side.

Something hit him in the chest—again, lower down. His fingers were torn loose from their grip on the rail. He staggered back, clutching, and the wave curled over and plunged down on him.

He gasped, choked, strangled. He was being swept along the deck, turning over and over helplessly, fighting for air, being battered, pounded. He hit a projection, gripped it with all his strength, dug his nails in. He hung on.

He breathed again. He heard the thunder of slatting canvas, the howl of the wind, and he sprang up and raced forward, half the length of the deck, to the jib-sheet.

With the strength of pure rage he hauled it in and backed it over, pulling until the veins stood out on his forehead and his eyes bulged. And then he made fast and walked over to Maartens, who had just finished his task at the foresheet.

"You knocked me loose from my hold back there," he said. "You meant to do it, and you did it. Well, look out for yourself from now on."

"Huh? It's a —— lie!" the mate bellowed. "You think because you're the skipper's pet— Well, lemme tell you, by ——"

"Stow that talk!" came from the poop like the crack of a whip above the roar of shaking canvas. "Get that boat in—Lively now!"

Both men jumped. For the moment his rage had driven everything else out of Chadwick's mind. And side by side, watching their chance, they passed the tackles. The men leaped aboard on the down roll of the schooner.

But as they hove the boat in and lashed it Chadwick knew, without knowing how he knew it, that the mate was afraid of him.

With the extra men aboard the schooner was easier to handle and they drove down on the next boat and hove to without being swept. In the same fashion they picked up another, although Saarenpa, the little Finnish boat-puller, had his hand smashed coming inboard. He made no complaint but worked stolidly with one hand, passing the forward tackle when they reached Jim Peace, the Nova Scotian hunter, with O'Connor and Peterson, clinging desperately to the bottom of their capsized craft.

The men were exhausted, weak with chill and exposure, and every plunge of the schooner threatened to crush them and their boat, but it never seemed to occur to any one to throw them a line and let the boat go. The men made three trials before they managed to hook on and only after the boat was lifted clear did they themselves scramble aboard as best they could. Hunters and boat-pullers were plentiful. Boats cost money. And as Oscaar remarked later in all seriousness:

"T'e honter mus' have boat. If he iss having no boat he iss not honting—an' t'at's no good."

They picked up the last one without incident and all hands turned to reef the main and foresails, a grinding hour and a half's work, after which the skipper attended to Saarenpa's injured hand.

The Finn was given a half a tumbler of whisky and told to look the other way while Morgan Hawke slashed away mangled flesh and skin with a razor-blade, set a couple of small bones, and bound the whole thing up. Chadwick, who had been told off to hold a light, carry water, and do other things incident to the operation, was sick and faint before it was over but the victim took it with no more than an occasional hissing breath taken between his teeth.

The skipper finished tying it up and nodded.

"That'll do! keep a rag 'round it and it'll be all right. Hm! You won't be able to pull an oar for a while though. You can help the doctor—and you can take his place in the focsle, Pete. Draw what you need from the slop-chest and get for'ard. We'll make a sailor of you yet."

CHAPTER VII

SEALING

THAT was the manner of his promotion. He now drew forty dollars a month instead of twenty-five, slept forward with the crew in the tiny, triangular space built into the eyes of the schooner—a place about the size of his dressing-room on his yacht, but which nevertheless held ten men to eat and sleep and live—and stood regular watches instead of being at everybody's beck and call every hour out of the twenty-four.

The change made another difference, too. Now that he was a boat-puller he was relieved of direct contact with the mate in the daytime at least although he still came under his orders during his watch on deck at night.

By the morning of the second day the storm had blown itself out and the boats were lowered again. Chadwick took his place in the second to go, with small dark Swift in the bow, his rifle in the rack and his shotgun across his knees. To Chadwick's joy, Oscaar Tollgren had the steering oar.

The seas were still running high although there was no more than a stiff breeze blowing. They had bulked large from the deck, but seen from the little sealing-boat they were enormous. At one moment the men were in the bottom of a green valley whose walls towered until they could see nothing but a patch of sky. The next they swung up and up on a dizzying curve until they could look over the gray foam-flecked waste and catch a glimpse of the schooner, a dark speck to the southward, before the swift downward rush began.

Chadwick had counted himself a reasonably good oarsman, but for the first hour or so he had all he could do to keep them bow on. But gradually, under Oscaar's coaching and an occasional word of advice from the hunter, he began to get the trick of it—the steady pull, not too hard, on the upswing, the check and poise on the crest of a hissing comber, and the little flirt of the stubby sea-sculls as they went down that eased the strain on the steering oar.

Presently they began to approach the seals, round brown heads that rose and fell to the lift of the seas, and Swift turned and knelt on the rest in the bow of the boat. A little later his gun cracked, and then again.

"Got him!"

They rowed to where the carcass floated, belly up, in a little patch of blood and oil, Chadwick and the hunter got it aboard, while Oscaar held them head to the seas.

From Swift in the intervals between shots Chadwick learned something of the habits of the seal. At this season they were traveling north, to the rookeries, great herds stretched out over miles of ocean swimming slowly, eating as they went and sleeping on the surface of the water. All through the spring they would migrate northward until some time in July they would reach the bleak sandy islands where they hauled out.

There the pups would be born and would stay with their mothers for the first six weeks of their lives. Then they would go back into the sea again, and no one would know what became of them for another year.

"Why aren't the rookeries the place to hunt them then?" Chadwick wanted to know. "If they're out on land—"

"You're dead right it's the place," Swift agreed, "if you can get away with it. Pull to starboard a coupla points. But you wanna watch your step when you try that. If they nail you, good night!"

"The Russians?" Chadwick asked, trying to seem matter of fact and casual.

"Them or your Uncle Sam. There's two main herds, y'un'stan', the Pribiloffs—that's American—and the Commander Islands—Russian. They're both protected, and the Pribiloffs is harder to raid. But believe me McNiel's Island Penitentiary is a whole lot better winter resort than the Siberian salt-mines."

"Ay bane by Commander Island two trip," was Oscaar's contribution. "Iss somet'ing to see ay'm talling yu. T'at big *sikatch*—bull—seal she's yellin' and fightin' an' hollerin', hunnert tausen' million of 'em,an' t'at *matka*—female—seal he's playin' wit' hes pup, yust lak lady wit' hes baby—so nice," he finished with a shy smile and a sweep of his steering oar that shot the boat into a wet, green hollow and half-way up the opposite crest.

"I'd like to see it," Chadwick said.

Swift grinned. "You will about the first of August, or I'm a cock-eyed Siwash," he predicted. "That's a little way the skipper has."

"You mean he'll raid in Russian waters?"

"I mean that's what he won't do nothin' else but, unless he'd got a whole lot of religion since last year. Starboard! What the —— you tryin' to do—swamp us?"

Chadwick swung the bow head on to the seas again.

"You mean to say I'm expected to risk the Federal Penitentiary or the salt-mines for forty dollars a month?" he demanded.

Oscaar looked bewildered. Swift took his eyes off the sea ahead to turn and stare curiously. He said—

"What did you think you were comin' on when you signed on a sealer—the annual Sunday-school outing o' the Third Baptist Church on Main Street?"

Chadwick flushed.

"Well I didn't sign on to go to jail," he insisted.

The hunter grinned.

"Well, the skipper'll prob'ly sail his ship about where he pleases," he remarked. "You can suit yourself about goin' with her."

In the days that followed Chadwick thought that over.

CHAPTER VIII

THREATS

THE sealing-boat floated easily on long sleek swells a hundred yards from crest to crest. Away to the northeast four tiny spots appeared and vanished and reappeared in a rough alignment—the other boats from the *Bering*. From time to time a little ball of smoke went up from one or another and a moment later a faint report came across the water.

Chadwick pulled happily, watching the hard brown muscle of his forearm spring to the stroke. He was feeling good these days, feeling like a fighting cock, and he was hard all over with the tough hardness of whipcord. The puffiness under his eyes was gone, and he had taken in his belt two holes. He could run aloft and take in topsails in a gale of wind. He could row all day in a choppy sea with none of the sick exhaustion that used to keep him awake through the long nights. He had thrashed O'Connor, the Galway man, in an epic battle because the Irishman had to know who was the better man, and Johnson for trying to steal the rowlocks out of his boat. He was the undisputed cock of the forecastle, and last night he had had another brush with the mate—and he had not come off second best.

Ever since the incident of the boarding sea when Maartens had knocked him loose from his hold on the pin-rail there had been a hardly definable change in Chadwick's manner. He knew the other was afraid of him, and he carried himself accordingly.

On the face of it the big mate was as abusive as ever, but it was noticeable in these days that he stopped short of real insult. He had developed a nervous disinclination, too, to letting Chadwick get behind him, and Chadwick saw it and took an unholy pleasure in working on it when they were on deck together. And while he did his work seamanlike and well, he managed to drawl out the customary, "Aye, aye, sir," in a tone and with a look that made the mate go hot all over and the forecastle chuckle gleefully.

It was this trick that had brought about the affair of last night. Maartens had bawled an order backed by his usual string of oaths and Chadwick's answer had brought his self-control, never very elastic, to the breaking point.

"You there, —— you! You look at me like that an' you'll get your head knocked off."

It was what he had been playing for.

"Like what, sir?" he said innocently.

"You know —— well what I mean, you Port Mahon baboon. Like you smelled something bad."

Chadwick scrutinized the flushed, angry features with a puzzled appraisement.

"I'm sorry sir," he said pacifically. "But really I don't look at you any oftener than I can help."

The man at the wheel gazed rigidly at the pole star, his shoulders writhing curiously. The mate said, "By ——" in a strangled voice, and his big hands clenched. He took a step forward, and Chadwick crouched and came in.

Maartens leaped aside and caught up a muckle from one of the boats—the short, loaded club that is used to kill a wounded seal before it is hauled aboard.

"Keep away now," he warned. "Keep clear, or I'll knock you over the rail. Get for'ard and ease off the flying jib before I bust your head open. Hear me?"

Chadwick was no fool. The muckle in anybody's hands was an ugly weapon. He grinned insolently and went forward as he was ordered.

But he knew now that the mate remembered the thing he had said that day in the storm—"Look out for yourself from now on"—and that it was getting on his nerves. And he knew that he could thrash him when the time came.

The hard springiness of his forearms pleased him very much.

For some minutes Oscaar had been staring off into the northeast across the smoking swells. Now he nodded and said—

"Sail ho!"

By sweeping the horizon as they came up on the crest of a roller Chadwick made out a white speck.

"Ay t'ink t'at bane t'e *Kamloops*," Oscaar said after a moment.

Swift was incredulous.

"G'wan, Squarehead," he jeered. "That's Alcatraz Island or the Cliff House on a Sunday afternoon. What d'you think you can see at this distance—the color o' the ship's cat?"

Oscaar grinned placidly.

"Yu wait. T'at bane t'e *Kamloops* aw'right. Me, ay'm knowing t'at."

The *Kamloops!* Something familiar about that name.

The white fleck drew nearer. It resolved itself into a sail.

"By —— you're right, Oscaar," Swift said suddenly, and his tone held a grudging admiration. "But how the —— did you know?"

The little Norwegian smiled.

"Me, ay'm knowing t'at," he repeated.

Chadwick thought:

"The *Kamloops*. I've run on to that name somewhere."

"Say," he broke in suddenly, "isn't she owned by a chap named Billiter? Yellow mustache and teeth like a hay-rake?"

"That's Swipes Billiter all right. But I didn't know he moved in your set." Chadwick's former estate was a subject of some mirth aboard. "How'd you happen to run on to him?"

There was no particular reason why he shouldn't have told of his encounter with the Englishman that day in Yokohama, but somehow the memory of himself at that time was beginning to leave a bad taste in his mouth. He turned it off.

"What sort of a bird is he?"

"Well, they call him Swipes."

"Swipes?"

"Tripes—ullage—fish-guts," Swift explained. "He isn't highly thought of in the fleet. He belongs with the Victoria crowd. They're mostly a good lot and don't like him any better'n we do. His crews always ship over, though! Gang o' limeys like himself. They get the skins—I'll say that for 'em," he added.

"T'ey saying he iss frand wit' t'e Rossians," Oscaar contributed. "Always t'ey saying t'at. Sometime he iss talling Rossian cruiser where iss sealer—so t'ey catching him. So t'en t'ose Rossian letting t'at Billiter take all t'e skin he want. T'ey saying t'at. Me, ay dunno."

"Oh, a sort of stool-pigeon?"

Swift's face darkened.

"—— him, I'd like to catch him at it just once. I do know this, that he's got outa some tight squeezes where other ships got caught. There was the *Minnie L.* outa Victoria—"

"T'ey saying he wass t'e faller told t'e Rossian t'at time."

"There was one of his limey boat-steerers got drunk at Yorsky's place," Swift explained, "an' he spilled a lotta mess about it. They say he got washed overside the next trip out, but it was common talk in Yokohama that Swipes smacked him on the head with a belaying-pin. Anyhow they never hung nothin' on him."

The schooner was abreast of them now and Chadwick had an opportunity to admire her long sweet lines and the spread of her canvas before they slid into a hollow that hid her from sight.

"She carries seven boats," Swift told him, "an' she'll sail two knots to our one. Ain't she a honey—for a —— lime-juicin' stool-pigeon?"

"Some time," said Oscaar gently, "we catchin' him wit' hes tricks. T'en maybe ay'm gettin' 'nother notch on may knife."

TO BE CONTINUED

Henderson's Luck

By EDGAR YOUNG

STEAMER after steamer dumped swarms of excited men upon the beach at Dyea. Laboring under packs, they hurried across the flats and struggled up the winding Chilcoot Trail to the summit and through the mountains north and east past Summit Lake and Crater Lake and on to the shores of Lake Lindeman where they whip-sawed rough lumber for the boats. They hammered the nails in and gouged oakum between the cracks. They slid the boats into the water, hoisted a bit of sail and clutched poles and oars. It was a mad race to beat the ice that was forming. It was a mad race of mad men, simple louts who had become insane with the lust of gold.

Across Lake Lindeman and through the swirling rapids to Lake Bennet and through the cañon to Lake LeBarge and out upon the Yukon poured these clumsy crafts, and on and on down the river until they were moored to the gear-strewn bank in front of Dawson City as lakes and rivers froze behind them.

Men who but a few months before had been store clerks and dairy hands were now bewhiskered, booted, rough-voiced prospectors; arguing wisely whether a skin or drill parky was the thing or whether the Eskimo bearskin or the sourdough way was the correct method for hitching dogs. An atavism had taken place. These men's own mothers would not have known them. The light veneer of civilization had peeled off. The primeval beast underneath showed stark and grim.

Just above Dawson and within sight of it was a Siwash Indian camp. The skin lodges dotted the point of land where the Klondike entered the Yukon, a squalid settlement of huts and bare salmon-drying racks. Old Chief Isaac was headman and his aide was "Siwash" George.

This Siwash George was a white man who had been with the tribe for a number of years. His favorite *klooch* was the daughter of Chief Isaac, and his three others were daughters of lesser fry.

"Henderson's Luck," copyright 1927, *by Edgar Young.*

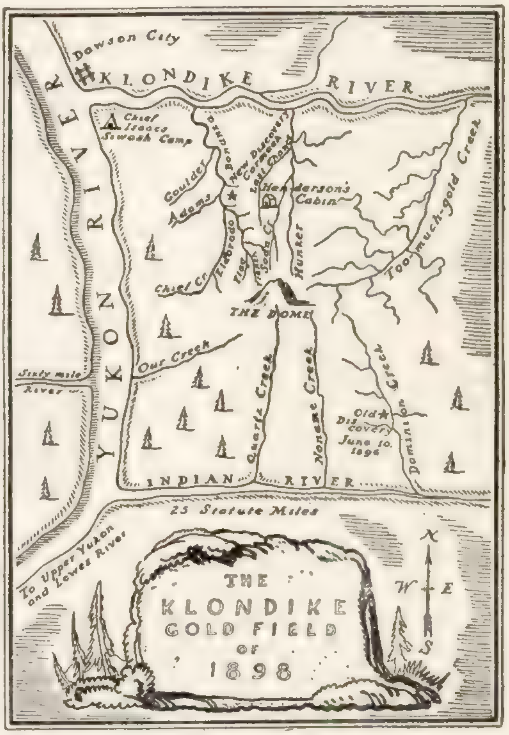
Originally he had been an English sailor, but he had deserted his ship at Nome and made his way up the Yukon to this place. He was thoroughly Siwash by this time. No greater compliment could be paid him than to tell him he was more like the Siwashes every day. Lying, theft, gluttony, lust and beastliness were not numbered among Siwash taboos. On the contrary they were distinct social attributes. George stood high in the tribe. If old Chief Isaac died peacefully or could be got out of the way without suspicion, Siwash George would fill his beaded *mukluks*.

Thus it stood at the beginning of the Klondike rush. The rush changed all things, even the plans of the Siwashes and those of Siwash George, the English sailor who had gone native. Within a week these cunning aborigines knew the value of United States and Canadian silver and bills and became rich beyond dreams selling salmon, skins, caribou meat, sled-dogs and other necessaries at fabulous prices.

George farmed Dawson City with all the craft he possessed. He sold shares in claims he had never staked and, in fact, never dreamed of owning, for he took no stock in the Klondike rush. In truth, at this time it had not yet become the Klondike rush. It was a jam of men who had poured into Dawson City on account of a report they had heard in the States. George knew that a few miners had gone to the outside with well filled pokes, but he knew they toiled many years to fill them before they went. At least one of them had been a gambler and had won his poke from other men who went out with lean pouches.

The big words of a couple of these had set San Francisco by the ears, and the report had spread by telegraph. You know how newspapers are. There was very little to base the rush into Dawson on. Siwash George chuckled. They were fools. They had brought in more gold than they would take out, thought he, and by hook and crook he would get all of it he could.

Now there happened to be at this time a man named Henderson living in a cabin on a creek that flowed into the Klondike River twenty miles above Dawson. He did not own the ground his hut stood on. He had merely built it there as he had built many others in similar places during past years. He was wintering there. During very bad weather he remained in the cabin; reading, making batches of sourdough bread or washing his clothes. He was a clean man physically and morally, although a bit strange in his ways.


Dawson City
KLONDIKE RIVER
YUKON RIVER
Chief Isaacs Siwash Camp
Goulder
Adams
Bonanza
New Discovery
Cormack
Last Chance
Henderson's Cabin
Eldorado
Flag
Soda Cr.
Hunker
Chief Cr.
Too-much-gold Creek
THE DOME
Our Creek
Sixty mile River
Quartz Creek
Noname Creek
Old Discovery June 10. 1896
Dominion Creek
INDIAN RIVER
25 Statute Miles
To Upper Yukon and Lewes River
N
W
E
S
THE KLONDIKE GOLD FIELD OF 1898

He happened to be there because he had heard of the silent pine-clad hills and ranges from a prospector he had met in Aspen, Colorado, and had drifted north to prospect. He liked it and remained year after year. Somewhere back in his head, perhaps, there was a thought that some day he would strike it rich and return to his home. This is mere conjecture. He had been there when the men who had gone back with well filled pokes had first arrived and he had seen them depart. He had not shared in their find, which to be exact was not made on the Klondike but on Indian River that flowed into the Yukon above Dawson. He had thought it was a pocket they had unearthed, and such it was. No bonanza was later found at this spot. He looked the ground over, shook his head and went up the Klondike to prospect. Sourdoughs had scorned even to try a pan on the Klondike. It was moose pasture, nothing more.

But Henderson went up there to prospect. He poked here and there. He studied the lay of the country with practised eye. He knew there was gold up that river. He even suspected the mother lode lay up there. Yet he had not found it. The place where he had built his cabin offered mere chicken-feed. He was barely able to pan out a few grains to grub-stake and clothe himself during the odd times he was not stalking along the river and creeks.

The man was not lazy. He made a business of prospecting. He covered on foot hundreds of miles of the roughest imaginable country, and some of it during the worst of weather. But up to this time he had had no luck. He was just unlucky. Yes, that is the word—he was unlucky.

This proves itself by what happened to him one day. It happened thiswise: Siwash George had been shooting off his head about mines and placers down in Dawson City until leading questions were being asked. He did not know the answers, and as there were some men there at the time who would just as soon have knotted a rope around George's neck as not, he sneaked off up the Klondike in search of Henderson.

He knew that Henderson was the best-posted man in the country when it came to minerals. This was an undebatable, undisputed fact. Siwash George figured he could pick good salable information out of the old prospector. With him on the trip George took his half-witted brother-in-law, the son of old Chief Isaac, by name "Skookum" Jim. Siwash George was not Henderson's type, as may be imagined. Yet Henderson treated them as befitted men arriving at a prospector's cabin. He gave them their supper, chatted and smoked with them and allowed the two to sleep in his moss-stuffed bunk of notched logs while he rolled in a blanket and slept on the floor.

In the morning he gave them their breakfast and walked up and down the creek with them, pointing out truthfully just what potentialities it might possess in the way of gold. He had been able, he told them, to pan a few cents here and there, but the creek was no good and he figured on moving across the ridge as soon as the weather broke.

About ten o'clock they got ready to leave. Siwash George begged Henderson to let him know if he struck good placer ground and Henderson agreed that he would. He did not tell Henderson about the mob of men who waited in Dawson—not that it would have made any difference if he had.

Now Siwash George was interested in what Henderson had said about moving over into the adjoining gulch, for he suspected that Henderson knew more about that gulch than he had said. This was an unfounded suspicion. Henderson had merely made up his mind to try it over there, as it was the one gulch in the neighborhood he had not tried his pan in and it would do as well as any other gulch for a base of supplies.

George and his relative did not go back down the creek as they had come up, but told Henderson they would cut over the ridge since they thought they could thus save time. Henderson watched them climbing the slope and went back into his cabin. Siwash George's eyes roved about as he and the Indian clambered down into the gulch on the other side, but as the Englishman had learned far more regarding the drying of salmon and skinning of game than he had about prospecting, his eyes told him nothing and he set off down the gulch toward the river with the Indian at his heels. They passed over a bare spot along the creek bank which was dotted here and there with bunches of moss among the snow. The half-wit Indian absent-mindedly reached down and pulled up a clump of moss.

Siwash George was ahead and the Indian shouted to him. When he turned he saw the lad holding a bunch of moss which he was staring at curiously. He stepped back to see what the Indian had found. When he saw what it was his eyes bulged. Lumps of gold the size of wheat grains were clinging to the moss roots and the place from which it came glinted in the sunlight. The two fell on their knees and graveled it out by handfuls.

This discovery is no figment of the imagination. It is an historical fact. By accident they had found the gold. They had neither pick nor pan. They were not prospectors and they were not prospecting. They had been to visit a veteran prospector. Yet they found it. It was these two men who found the Klondike field.

George stepped off the ground and staked Discovery, the largest claim allowed the discoverer by law. The Indian staked a claim above for himself and one below for "Cultus" Charlie, his brother. The Discovery claim really belonged to the Indian, but he was half-witted and it really did not make much difference. What he did stake was worth plenty, as was afterward proved.

They set off down the creek at a run and arrived in the Siwash camp during the night. The next morning they filed on the claims legally. The Siwashes were already on their way to the find, and as soon as Dawson got wind of it the wildest pandemonium reigned. Men started running without so much as picking up their packs. Dogs were hustled into harness any old way or men grabbed the collars and clapped them about their own necks and set off dragging sleds behind them.

All the men, the few battered courtezans, the gamblers, the traders, the bartenders, the entire town went mad and joined the rush. It was a stampede the like of which was never seen before. For the next three days stakes were being driven and rocks piled up at the corners of claims. For ten miles up and down the gulch was staked solid. A mushroom settlement of tents sprang up.

This might as well have been happening in the moon so far as Henderson was concerned. He quietly pottered about his cabin, a mere half mile away, getting ready to move over the ridge.

It was four days after George left that the temperature moderated and he started across to look for a cabin site. On top of the ridge he stopped and stared. The gulch was alive with men. Trees were being hacked down and cabins thrown up. Men were slinging picks into the frozen soil in an ecstasy of excitement. Not a sound of all this turmoil had crossed the ridge. The blanket of snow and the direction of the wind had killed the sound.

He walked on down and looked around. He met an old sourdough acquaintance who had managed to stake a good claim. From him Henderson learned the details. This acquaintance did not know where Henderson's cabin was located. He was sorry he did not know or he would have come over and told him. Henderson walked up and down the gulch. He saw the claims covered all the good ground and beyond it. He did not stake a worthless piece on the outskirts. The place was staked out. He would have to go somewhere else. He crossed back over the ridge to his cabin and spent the night there. The next day he rolled up his stuff and went farther up the main river.

Some men less well balanced than Henderson would have looked up Siwash George and wiped up the ground with him. A short trip back over the ridge would have let the old man in on the find. The pair would never have found it had he not had his cabin where it was and had they not come to visit him. Yet they did not take the few minutes it required. He flew into no rage nor did he curse the gods for dealing him an unjust hand. Perhaps he did not expect Siwash George and his brother-in-law to act any differently than they did.

If he ever felt harsh things over the affair no man in Klondike ever heard him voice them. There were too many other disappointments that came on the heels of this one to make it appear anything out of the ordinary. He had no luck. Men poured into the country by thousands. Swedes left all the Alaskan salmon-canning factories down on the coast and came up the prospect. This is how so many Swedes came to be up there. They were as dumb as oxen, the very lowest type of Swedes. Yet they found gold. Every State in the United States, every province of Canada, every country in the world, almost, poured men up into Klondike in those mad days of '97 and '98.

The majority of them found gold. They found it at the grass roots. They found it atop the spurs. They found it in the moose pastures. Some wag stuck up a sign in a swamp saying—

THIS MOOSE PASTURE IS FOR
SWEDES AND CHECHAKOS

Yes, they found it in that very same swamp. Men with scarcely enough brains in their heads to boil a pot of beans, much less make a batch of sourdough bread, found placers worth hundreds of thousands.

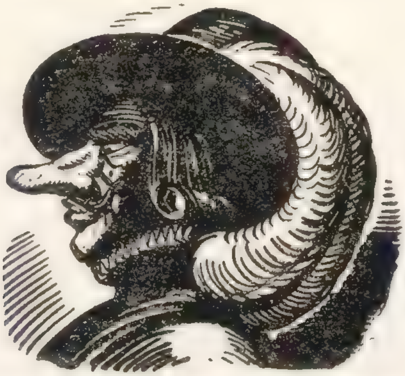
Henderson found nothing. He tramped all over. He just missed striking it. He arrived just after it had all been staked. They found it where he had just barely missed going to on former trips to the same place, where he had made a detour, where he had crossed to the next gulch. It was enough to unbalance the man's mind. Yet it did not drive him insane. He smiled slowly, and now and then joked with an acquaintance about it. It was not that he was headstrong, not that he knew it all. He would have staked beside a Swede or a Siwash had he been there to stake. But he wasn't there.

Siwash George's name was on every lip in the whole world where telegraph dispatches were read. He was spoken of by name in story and chanted of in poems and songs. He was deified, apotheosized. Henderson was smiling and quiet to the last. He managed to get by. He panned a little dirt here and there where the ground was too poor for a Swede to stake. He never had to beg for a thing.

One night he staggered into Dawson with a pinch of dust to trade for flour and beans. He was standing at the counter while the clerk weighed the dust. It weighed out just ninety-four cents' worth. He reeled back and put his hand to his heart. It was slightly dramatic but it was not acting. He straightened up and looked around. A group of men walked over and looked at the old fellow curiously. He was a stranger to them. While they looked a mighty tremor seized him. He flung out his hands and dropped to the floor. The clerk ran around and felt his pulse. Henderson was dead.

Two days later he was buried in a hole that had been thawed in the frozen muck on the outskirts of Dawson. Two mangy dogs were harnessed to a sled with a broken runner, and five men followed the body to the grave. No words were said. He was dumped in and the muck shoveled in upon him. He is there yet if the wolves haven't pawed the dirt away and got to him. They do that when the grave is shallow and no rocks are piled on top.

THE GOODLY COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS



Cyrano de Bergerac

By POST SARGENT

IN THE great courtyard before the guard-house of the Louvre, a group of the King's Guard lounged or played at fence, late one spring afternoon of the year 1643. Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, captain of this company of Gascons, kept eagle eye over the sword-play; giving now a hint to some awkward *cadet* fresh from the provinces; now a demonstration of a newly invented *estocade* of the Italian school of arms, to some old campaigner from the Low Countries.

The stamping of feet, the clicking of blade against blade, the crackling Gascon expletives of some of the fencers, punctuated the conversation of their leisure-taking comrades.

"*Sapristi!*" exclaimed one of the latter to his bench-mate. "Saw one ever such a wrist as has this De Bergerac; an eye so true, such delicacy of touch united to muscles of steel? In a happy moment did his parents christen our Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac by the further name 'Hercule.' Hercules, Hector, Achilles—a triad of ancient warriors whose combined excellencies meet in this Gascon."

"A nonpareil," the other nodded in agreement. "An upright soul, as well, whose every act spells honor. Poet and satirist, as well as champion swordsman. One fault he has, the noblest in the gift of the gods—an uncompromising spirit that flaunts its independence under the very noses of the patronizing grandees."

"Ay, in effect, an Achilles," sneered a youth who had followed the conversation. "An alluring mark he offers for the tool of the phlebotomist, be the latter disciple of Mars or Æsculapius. But here no vulnerable heel for blood-letting, but a nose—ye gods! a nose! Saw you ever such a snout? The grandsire of all the pelican-beaks since the time of the ark of Noé."

The second speaker eyed him sternly.

"Better men than thou have died ere this, my lad, for merely having sneezed or blown an indiscreet nose in the presence of Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac.’

"A bully, I swear," returned the youth. "Ay, I well know the price you put upon his swaggering deeds, and how you hold him up as a mirror to youth."

"A true Gascon," the other replied, "with all our faults and noble qualities. None knows them better. As his closest friend these many years, I know—"

"To others, these eulogies, Monsieur Lebret," the youth interrupted. "A truce to these conventional praises, these polite fictions that have before this built false pedestals for heroes and saints. You term him Gascon. No Gascon, he! No gentleman! Grandson of a petty scrivener of the Rue des Prouvaires close by the stinks of the great markets. Son of a rustic from a farmstead just beyond the city walls.

"*De* Bergerac, forsooth! A *nom de terre*—a land-title—self-given to feign nobility. Braggart, quack and swashbuckler, if the truth be told!"

Lebret grew red with rage and seemed about to spring upon the indiscreet critic of his friend. His attention was just then diverted by a cry of admiration that rose in chorus from the spectators.

Cyrano had been facing three opponents at one time. With lightning flicks of his rapier he had contented himself for a time with parrying the concerted attack of his assailants. His movements were unhurried, each motion seeming automatic; his bearing nonchalant, even disdainful; his breath came evenly.

Cold gray eyes—anomalous eyes in the face of a youth—looked over the monstrous arch of his nose. The eyes of the born killer—arrogant and merciless.

Suddenly his tactics changed. He took a swift step backward and to one side, drawing a single adversary after him. A flash of his rapier and his opponent's weapon went sailing through the air. Before it had time to touch the ground, a second combatant was similarly disarmed. The third, bewildered by the inexplicable happening, found himself the target, it seemed, of a battalion of sword-points that touched simultaneously cheek and breast and groin; that threatened in a same instant throat-cutting and disemboweling.

A final flash of Cyrano's sword. One half of a luxuriant and cherished mustache, severed close to the lip, scattered to the breeze, while its owner's rapier flew from his hand.

But it never reached the ground. From the crowd of bystanders a hand shot out and plucked the rapier neatly from the air. The new owner of the weapon advanced, sweeping off his plumed hat with his disengaged hand. He wore the costume of the King's *Mousquetaires*, with certain insignia that proclaimed him captain-lieutenant in that famed company.

"By my faith, a master's stroke, that last, Monsieur de Bergerac," he observed with a courteous bow to the latter. "Though the wrist was held a trifle stiff, if one may venture a friendly word of criticism of a masterpiece."

The spectators hung breathlessly upon his words or glanced anxiously at Cyrano de Bergerac. Jealousies existed, that bred frequent bickerings and bitter combats between members of the King's Guards and his Musketeers, as also between these and the personal guards of that fox and miser, Mazarin, Cardinal and Prime Minister of his Most Christian Majesty, Louis Quatorze. Here, indeed, might be subject for an epic quarrel that would involve not only the two finest swordsmen of France, but also the entire companies of the respective champions.

But Cyrano took no offense, though to a close observer it might have seemed that his cold eyes grew a trifle harder. He answered affably enough.

"*Pardi!* 'twas you I glimpsed from the corner of my eye, Monsieur d'Artagnan! I thought not to have such a noble witness of my poor efforts, else had I essayed for your approval a new stroke I lately taught to our newly imported Italian *maestro di scherma* at the court. Though I do fear that my awkwardness has somewhat inconvenienced his sword arm for a fortnight to come."

D'Artagnan smiled.

"Not content with being the paragon of swordsmen, *mon ami*, you needs must seek continual glory in the piquant word, the sly quip, the cutting satire on our poor foibles. Fortunate mortal! To be at once artist in arms and in letters."

Cyrano's budding resentment vanished. His vanity was touched.

"You were saying, monsieur?"

"I had the privilege, Monsieur de Bergerac, to witness last evening at the Cardinal's the performance—said to be rehearsed from manuscript—of your comedy, 'The Pedant Duped.' Zounds! but a laughter swept the hall—a laughter such, I wager, as has called for unguents this day on many a sore rib; and has made work for many a poor seamstress to our fair ladies."

Cyrano beamed.

"Say you so? A modest offering, unworthy of the wits of city and court. But, such as it is, monsieur, I purpose with the printer's aid to present it to the populace of Paris when my purse shall allow of such self-indulgence."

"Fail not thus to protect the child of your brain, Monsieur de Bergerac. For mind you, I have it on the best authority that our worthy Thespian, Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who is now winning fame under the name of Molière—methinks he was your fellow student of the Collège de Beauvais—states plainly his purpose of lifting phrases and whole scenes from your comedy into one he is now projecting." [*]

Cyrano shrugged his shoulders, though plainly he was delighted at the news that he might thus shine in the reflected light of a greater man.

"Molière is welcome to his gleanings from my harvest in the fields of the Muse Thalia. But even were I disposed to make ado over the matter, how turn genius aside from its course save at sword's point? Have I not heard him with these very ears, anent his pilferings from Italian and Latin authors, assert his license to pillage where he will?"[†]

Meanwhile the spectators were whispering among themselves in considerable excitement. The danger point in the meeting of the two noted duelists was well past, they knew, but the hope still persisted that some noteworthy deed might yet grow out of the encounter.

Lebret in particular, as the intimate friend, chief admirer and future biographer of Cyrano, was exultant.

"Remark well," he whispered, "how Monsieur Charles de Baatz-Castelmore, *dit* d'Artagnan, favors our Cyrano with his politest attentions. 'Tis known that he has the ear of the Cardinal-Minister, and has the power to whisper a friend into Mazarin's good graces."

The youth who seemed to take pleasure in the rôle of iconoclast spoke up, although it might be remarked that his voice was pitched in lower tones.

"An he does not disdain the name of Cardinal's pimp, of wet-nurse to the most niggardly lickpenny of Europe, Cyrano might rise high in Mazarin's favor. As for the Chevalier d'Artagnan, granting his surpassing skill with sword, wine-cup and in the art of cozening poor trollops out of their earnings; d'Artagnan, I say, is such an one as I mention, else rumor and his own '*Mémoires*' lie."

An electric spark passed through the group at the last words.

"Memoirs?—of D'Artagnan? Impossible! Who is the lucky bookseller? His fortune will be made. Has the work passed the censor, or is it smuggled in from Holland? I'll warrant there'll be vast worry in many a proud family of the realm, and more than one scandal disclosed at court. Is mention made of Comte Rantzau's drinking bout at the siege of Arras? *Pardienne!* The rumor ran that he began his four hours of tippling before the battle by tossing off twelve bottles of champagne, remarking that they were a 'mere drop of water in the sea.' And afterward, 'tis said, he truly drank."

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[*] It is evident after these many years that D'Artagnan spoke without satire or malice, and with some knowledge of facts. Not only did the great Molière, but Racine as well, plagiarize episodes and language in Cyrano's "The Pedant Duped."

[†] This is no idle assertion on Cyrano's part. Molière's own words were, in answer to the reproach of plagiarism: "*Je prends mon bien ou je le trouve.*" "I help myself to needed matter wherever I find it." Alas and happily! Shakespeare did the same! But both, in deeds and mind-stuff, were of the adventure breed. Though they pillaged the caches of their predecessors on the trail, they replaced literary hardtack and "salt-horse" there found, by intellectual red meat and the appetizing dainties of the imagination.

A dozen questions and observations of the sort. The youth protested laughingly:

"Nay, nay! I only repeat the *oui-dire*, the tittle-tattle of the landlady of Monsieur d'Artagnan. Her vagrant glance—she vows no more than vagrant—lighted, by chance, on some papers on the chevalier's table. The wind, a drafty room, a page or two scattered and retrieved! *Enfin*, a piquant word catches her eye. No more than that, she swears."[*]

Lebret was jealous for his hero.

"*Peuh!*" he snorted. "These memoirs, doubtless of a piece with a thousand others that daily flood the bookstalls, will have the sole merit of being written by a hand that wields the sword divinely well. But Cyrano! Ah, messieurs, did you but know the artist that speaks in him and manifests itself with equal eloquence through rapier point or with nib of quill!

"It is no breach of confidence to mention that his dreamer's mind is even now laboring in the ferment of strange ideas that are to produce a masterpiece. Sparkling wit, a mordant irony, the heights and depths of philosophy, the quaint conceits that speak of time and space and life; man the earthworm viewed through the moonbeams' haze."[†]

The attention of the whispering group was recalled to the principal actors of this scene by the words of D'Artagnan himself.

"*En garde*, then, monsieur, since you do me the honor to exchange thrusts with me in token of amity. Monsieur le Capitaine—" turning to Carbon de Castel-Jaloux—"will doubtless do us the pleasure of acting as arbiter. At the first *touché* we'll cry a halt, and in any event a Gascon[‡] will be returned victor."

The fencers saluted formally, then fell to. Cautious describes their first movements, their instinctive fire and dash being restrained by mutual respect.

For some minutes each man feinted and lunged in turn, with no other object than to try out his adversary's strength and skill. Then came a series of lightning passes that made the spectators gasp, though many excellent swordsmen were in the group. But these were only the preliminaries of the real fence-play to follow.

Both men were of intense earnestness. Gone was Cyrano's bored nonchalance; D'Artagnan's calm features were now set in stern lines. To be sure, no life depended on the outcome; nor was injury intended, save it came by accident or awkwardness. But to spectators and champions alike, more than the fate of the realm hung on a victory for either—the supremacy in arms of King's Guards or King's Musketeers.

The news would fly over all Paris before nightfall. Sneering lips would say:

"The pitcher has gone once too often

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[*] The scandal-mongering of such as the youth and landlady has had its consequences. When Alexandre Dumas, in 1845, set down for ten million readers of "The Three Musketeers," the life of our beloved adventurer, D'Artagnan, he availed himself of a book, the "*Mémoires d'Artagnan*," etc., of whose authenticity he had no doubt, though good taste caused him to make omission of the scurrilous element in the work. Others fell heir to the mistake, notably a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1897). From our superior position as custodians of the records of Dame Adventure's brood, we are privileged to trace those memoirs to their real author, one Courtilz de Sandras, who published them in 1701. And if the real D'Artagnan does not match the idealized portrait of him by Dumas, still less is he the alleged autobiographic blackguard of Courtilz de Sandras and of the iconoclastic youth of this tale. Likewise does the true Cyrano de Bergerac dwell on a middle plane between the glorification of Rostand's great drama and the detractions of the youthful scoffer.

[†] There can be no doubt that Lebret has had at least a glimpse of the manuscript of Cyrano's "Comic History of the Voyage to the Moon." If not the work of genius that Lebret considers it, the book deserves, because of its quaint originality and genuine humor, to be drawn from its oblivion of several centuries. Yet—unknown, it still lives! For when the fledgling adventurer of tender ten lays down his "Arabian Nights" and "Crusoe" and "Telemachus," he graduates to father's book—the "Gulliver's Travels" of Jonathan Swift. Joyfully father and lad journey to Lilliput, Brobdingnag and Laputa, and venture into the country of the Houyhnhms unconscious of the fact that these strange lands and peoples of satire were first revealed to Dean Swift by the pioneer Cyrano de Bergerac.

[‡] It is possible that D'Artagnan was unaware of the fact that Cyrano was a native of the north of France. The further fact that he was accepted among the proud, headstrong Gascons as one of themselves speaks well for his adaptability and fame as swordsman. The Gascon form of his name, his ready use of the Gascon idiom, his personality helped out the deception. It is only in recent years that it has been discovered that Cyrano's immediate ancestors were bourgeois of Paris and its vicinity. Insofar, at least, the sneering youth was right.

to the well. Cyrano de Bergerac has at last found his master."

Or else—

"D'Artagnan, that Gascon braggart, was bested at sword-play last evening by a scribbler of verses and poor comedies."

Nor would the matter end there. The hated guardsmen of that detestable Mazarin would seek to crowd the losers to the wall in tavern and street. How, as men of honor, evade such open insults and pretexts for brawls and quarrels? Now, too, when the King had revived the old edicts of Henri IV and Richelieu against dueling and was visiting every violation with severe penalties.

But their worries were swallowed up in wonder.

D'Artagnan appeared to abandon caution and attacked furiously with right points and thrusts. De Bergerac's friends shivered in apprehension, but Cyrano only smiled slightly and parried the other's attacks with finished but rather fantastic play, seeming to wish to tantalize his opponent by lifting his sword a trifle out of position of guard. Only Carbon de Castel-Jaloux remarked this feature of the maneuver: that Cyrano's point alone was off center, thus enticing a too-eager lunge.

D'Artagnan's stern features relaxed into a smile as he drew warily back on guard.

"The true French school, Monsieur. Was Berthelot your master?"

"Your pardon, Chevalier! Of masters, never a one, save as I may be so honored today."

As Cyrano spoke he advanced a step and made play at D'Artagnan's chest, following by a finely executed *dégagement dans la ligne basse* that would have spelled defeat for any other than the Musketeer. The latter responded by a *riposte en seconde,* attacking immediately afterward with such fury that both swords engaged at the hilt.

The fencers broke, returning instantly to the attack. A straight thrust by Cyrano was met by a thrust *en seconde,* so swift that only the poet's marvelous agility saved him from defeat. As it was, D'Artagnan's point missed him only by a hair's breadth.

For fifteen minutes longer—thrust, parry and thrust, feint, *riposte du tac au tac,* thrust *sur les armes, en tierce* or *en quarte,* followed each other and were repeated in bewildering sequence and variety. But never once did either combatant succeed in touching his adversary's body, even slightly enough to end the bout. Only a lace cuff of D'Artagnan showed the signs of conflict; torn on his own sword hilt.

An awed hush had settled upon the spectators, broken only when a repressed sigh or sob escaped from some straining breast.

Years afterward, in 1655, when the *Gazette* announced briefly that Monsieur de Bergerac, poet and dramatist, former member in the Guards of the King, who had done heroic service in the siege of the Spanish at Arras—that Monsieur de Bergerac had died the night before of wounds dealt treacherously from a housetop by certain hirelings of a lord unnamed, men here present were proud to recount the story of the bloodless combat between D'Artagnan and De Bergerac.

"*Morbleu!* That Cyrano! Methinks I see him yet. That nose of which he complained that it 'preceded him in every place by a quarter of an hour.' A sword that flamed like that of the angel at the gate of paradise. Justly they called him '*démon de la bravoure*'—a very demon of bravery."

But finally D'Artagnan drew back, lowered the point of his sword and cried:

"*Je laisse.* I give over! Come embrace me, my friend. Ten thousand devils! I never thought to find a man who could parry my master-stroke, the pride and darling of what I have of skill in fence."

He embraced Cyrano and swept a bow to the others.

"De Bergerac, your admirer and willing pupil! Messieurs, your servant!"

Having returned the weapon in his hand to its owner, he turned to go; then, yielding to a sudden generous thought, he wheeled about and delivered a word of warning that was to prove true prophecy a dozen years hence.

"Guard him well, your jewel of letters and swordsmanship! I name no names, but there be those who take in ill part his quill that scratches and scars the sullied surface of their escutcheons. They fear to face his sword, but will not scruple to hire the daggers of the assassins who stab from the shadows."

And thus it fell out in the end. But Cyrano's comrades, with the skepticism of youth, paid slight heed to the Cassandra-like prophecies of the Musketeer. After the latter's departure, they fell in glee upon their champion, gave him a thousand accolades with their rough hands, and bore him off in triumph to a cabaret close by the Palais Royal.

NOW Cyrano was a figure in Paris. His dress, his duels, his goings and comings, his bravados, his whimsical flights of fancy, his bursts of generosity, his verses—now tender, now vitriolic—his eccentricities, his monumental nose, were of interest to the good bourgeois of Paris. And for this reason it happened that in the Rue St. Honoré Monsieur Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, King's Guardsman, met and took mortal offense at Master Fagotin, Monkey and Actor in the little Theater of the Rue Guenégaud.

Poor Fagotin! Poor Cyrano! In an instant of rage the interval of a half million years was crossed: the man lost the heritage of centuries of hothouse culture; the poor simian rose to almost human heights of—brutishness. A comedy! A tragedy!

Master Fagotin, trained wonder-ape of those days, was out for an airing with his trainer, Brioché. And Brioché, with a shrewd eye to the fads and fashions of the moment, had tricked out the monkey *à la Cyrano*—"stout as a meat pasty of Amiens, tall as a small man, he was clad in a doublet with six hip flaps, and with a baldric from which hung a buttoned rapier." And with a nose whose imitative effects were achieved by the addition of an inch or two of modeled wax.

Cyrano and his apish simulacrum met suddenly face to face. The quick eye of the artist Cyrano took in the parody at once; his ear detected the muffled titters of the gutter crowd. Cyrano the ruffler became enraged and drove the loafers before him, dispersing them at the price of a few pricks and a few torn doublets. The monkey, trained to fence and thinking it all part of the game, drew his hanger and entered the fray. Valiantly he made a pass or two at the dreaded duellist. Cyrano pranced in futile rage; the poor ape imitated the steps. Cyrano passed a trembling hand over his face; the monkey plucked at his own fatal appendage in emulation. Cyrano thrust the unfortunate creature through the heart and Fagotin was gathered to his fathers.*

FLUSHED with his recent honors, with his more recent anger, and doubtless with wine, Cyrano sat in the Cabaret of the Saint Esprit in the Rue Neuve Luxembourg, listening complacently to the fulsome praises of his comrades.

Enters one Lignière, political rhymster, drunkard, hated plague of the great lords whom he pilloried with his pen. All a-tremble and whimpering with fear, is Lignière. A craven who dares name Cyrano "friend" and adjures him to save his life. A recent satiric poem aimed at a great nobleman has brought its reward. Now, at one of the gates of Paris, the porte de Nesle, a band of the lord's hirelings lie in wait for Lignière, whose lodgings are without the city walls.

Cyrano eyes the drunkard askance and more than a trifle contemptuously.

"More than an hundred bullies, you say. How comes it that Monsieur Lignière who wears no sword and, methinks, has lately been unsparing with the wine, is so apt in an arithmetic that calls for

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*The owners of Fagotin sued Cyrano for damages. The case aroused great public interest and was decided in Cyrano's favor. The latter defended himself with great wit, asserting his willingness to pay damages, but only in *monnaie de poète* or *monnaie de singe*—that is, in "poet's coin" or "monkey-money"—almost untranslatable puns; the expressions being used in vulgar parlance to signify "sham money, blarney, bunkum."

courage and a steady eye, no less his presence a half league from this spot?"

"Goo' frien' Mesnard—like my goo' frien' Cyrano—goo' frien' came to warn," hiccoughed the rhymster. "Saw hun'red men—hic—hour 'go—Porte de Nesle—hic—heard talk—kill great poet, Lignière—came find goo' frien' Cyrano—hic—Cyrano save Lignière 'gainst whole worl'."

Here Lebret whispers some remonstrance in Cyrano's ear, to which Cyrano replied in his decisive manner.

"Enough, Lebret! He names me *ami*, and were he sottish Bacchus himself, drunk on ten tuns of Muscat, yet must I for that word be his protector."

Then rising and turning to Lignière:

"You shall sleep at home tonight," he said. "Come now and let us view those hundred heroes. Walk behind me, and I'll made bed-quilts of them for you."

Accompanied by Lebret, Monsieur de Cuigy and Monsieur de Brissailles, as well as by a numerous escort of guardsmen and curious hangers-on of the tavern, Cyrano set out for the Porte de Nesle.

The first dusk was closing in when the gates were reached, but sufficient light remained to reveal several score of armed men lounging near the guard-house, or pacing the road outside the gate. Cyrano drew his hat lower over his eyes and turned to his escort.

"Stay where ye are and in no case offer aid. This matter touches Cyrano alone."

As he approached the gates with Lignière, one of the loungers started up with a low hiss of warning to the others. A little knot of the bravos closed in on Lignière, who was by now rendered completely sober by the walk and fright. Cyrano thrust himself between the cutthroats and their intended victim.

"Stand aside, I pray you, monsieur," said one. "We have no quarrel with you, but merely a little urgent business to transact with the gentleman at your back."

At which his sword leaped out treacherously at Lignière. Cyrano's sword flicked out carelessly, and the ruffian fell back, cursing furiously and nursing a wounded wrist.

"Quickly, get thee behind me, thy back to the wall," Cyrano said to Lignière, before the nearest rascals had recovered from their surprize at the unexpected resistance.

As he took his position in front of the rhymster, a dozen of his assailants approached him cautiously from front and both sides, while a score of others rushed to their aid; stragglers meantime appearing from outside the gates. Several soldiers peered through the *grille* of the guard-house, but evidently considered their aid futile to thwart the designs of the mob. Cyrano's friends remained clustered together a short distance off, watching with anxiety and pride the duel of their champion with the crew of ruffians.

One fellow, thinking to gain all the glory for himself, dropped suddenly on one knee and essayed a thrust for Cyrano's vitals. Cyrano's point sent him reeling back minus an ear, while the blade continued without loss of motion into the throat of a too-emulous comrade.

Then a concerted rush in which numbers only served to bring disorder in that crowded space. Those in the foremost rank, urged forward by the press, were spitted on Cyrano's sword, that darted like lightning here and there, with each stroke taking toll of an ear, an eye, a nose, a throat.

"*Sang de Dieu!* he's down!" cried Lebret in anguish, as Cyrano disappeared for a second in the surge.

But the mob gave back from the terrible sword and Cyrano appeared once more, cool and swiftly efficient, with a slowly mounting rampart before him of dead and wounded.

And now Cyrano's mood changed. Up to the present he had fought in silence. Now he swept off his hat and, stepping out a pace from the wall, became the aggressor. The light from a torch—for night had now fallen—fell on his face.

"*Nom de Dieu!* that nose!" shrieked one more sharp-eyed than his fellows. " 'Tis Cyrano!"

At the dreaded name the slow backward march quickened to retreat and became a panic rout. Ruffian trampled upon ruffian seeking quick escape from the terrible sword.

And now Cyrano de Bergerac was among them, striking and thrusting, fleshing his blade in throats and bowels. And angered at the reference to his nose, he thundered after the fleeing bravos in a voice that only added to their panic:

"Turn and fight, ye cowardly sheep! A nose, forsooth! Know then, ye rogues, that a great nose is the mark of a brave, witty, courteous, affable, generous and liberal man! And as a sign of my liberality, I give ye this, and this, and that."

Each word was accompanied by a stroke or thrust that wounded or killed. But the mob, with fear for wings, streamed through the gates and was soon lost in the darkness outside. Within the walls, a score of dead or wounded lay stretched on the ground and were so found on the following morning. Countless hats and cloaks and swords were strewed about, mute witnesses of the panic flight.

De Bergerac, recovered from his anger, touched Lignière on the shoulder.

"Your way is clear. Be off to bed and have no fear. None will touch you, now that it is known that Cyrano de Bergerac protects you. But have a care. A milder mood in your lampoons would not be amiss."

He listened gravely to Lebret who whispered in his ear.

"My own, you say? But that is another matter. What Cyrano writes is for the Muses, and art must be free. Besides, I have my sword. But now, messieurs, the day has been overfull of these small enjoyments and I feel some slight weariness. What say ye to a stoup of wine and bed?"

And on their way back to the city, Cyrano broke a long silence.

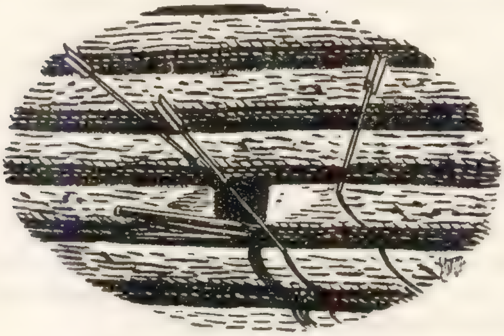
"Think you, Lebret, that Monsieur d'Artagnan would have conducted himself more bravely tonight?"

And his tone was a trifle wistful, as of one cut off from inner praise. For Cyrano de Bergerac was a philosopher and knew futility.

The Fighting Years

By

HUGH PENDEXTER



CONCLUDING A SIX-PART STORY

I WAS scouting in advance of Forbes' expedition against Fort Duquesne, but I had been turned from my duty when I saw the traitor Phindry betray the Beverly family into the hands of some French Indians. With the aid of Giga-tsuhli, or Bloody-Mouth, my Cherokee friend, I rescued Mrs. Beverly, her mad sister Mercy, her daughter Ann, and Arlington, a young fellow captured with them.

While we were hiding in a cave Arlington confessed to me that he was really Dandy Case, a fugitive from justice. He loved Ann Beverly, and explained her failure to reciprocate his affection by a nonsensical theory that the girl loved me.

When the women had recovered their strength we struck back toward our army, hoping to meet the vanguard before the Indians, who had discovered our flight, could recapture us. But the redskins overtook us and we had to take refuge in a deserted and roofless cabin in a clearing near Braddock's road. Giga-tsuhli remained outside in the forest.

"KILL 'em! Kill 'em! Kill all of 'em!" screamed Mercy.

"Yes, sister. They all oughter be killed!" passionately agreed Mrs. Beverly. It was the first time I had heard Mercy sound her war-cry without being told to hush. Case squatted beside me and whispered—

"Why don't they come?"

"They'll try to burn the walls first," I explained. "They could capture or kill us in one rush and inside of three minutes of time. But they prefer using up a day, hoping they can get us without losing a man."

Shortly after this a long flaming shaft soared into the opening from the south side and fell a few yards beyond the north wall. Another followed and descended inside the four walls. Howls of exultation greeted this bit of marksmanship, although it did us no harm.

Case was relieved. He jeered—

"Let the fools shoot all day!"

But now the savages on the north side began sending fire-arrows in a lesser arc, to give the burning ends just enough time to burst into a strong flame. One

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"The Fighting Years," copyright 1927, by Hugh Pendexter.

skimmed the walls and stuck in the ground. One lodged in the top log of the south wall. I knocked it down with my gun. Screams of exultation from the north warned me they had scored another hit. I had not heard the arrow when it lodged, but the smoke permitted me to locate it. Standing on a log of wood, I lifted the kettle and poured enough water over the top to extinguish the blaze. A volley of bullets was fired to discourage this maneuver and one ball glanced off the side of the kettle with a shrill whistle.

"They never can burn us out!" declared Case, now quite at his ease.

The rest of us did not share his optimism. We feared the moment when several arrows should lodge in the walls at the same time. I had used half a kettle of water in killing one patch of fire. The logs were bone dry and once a blaze ate beneath the surface it would be most difficult to stop. Each time an arm was shown above the walls there would come a volley and out of so many bullets it would be miraculous that one did not hit.

I tied one end of the braided cord to the handle of the kettle and stood ready to refill it when the last of its contents had been used. The savages to the south of us resumed their fire-arrows. They were shooting almost pointblank at the wall. Case desperately enlarged the loophole in the east wall. Mrs. Beverly tied a piece of blanket to a four-foot piece of sapling and soused it in the kettle. We had immediate need of it. An arrow stuck in the south wall and blazed fiercely. I seized the mop, and went to the top, leaned over and scoured the rapidly spreading red patch until it was killed out.

A hail of bullets was sent at me. As I dropped to the ground Ann cried—

"That was very brave, Mister Nolton."

"It was very necessary," I told her, and feeling my face grow uncomfortably warm.

Then what I had dreaded became a fact.

Several arrows plunked into the north wall. Mercy screamed and waved the bayonet. Before I could get there Case mounted the wall, calling for me to hand him the wet mop. I had run a great risk in killing one burning shaft, and he had three to extinguish. I handed up the mop and he rested one elbow over the top of the roofless wall and quickly disposed of two shafts. To reach the third he was forced to change his position with guns blazing away at him from all sides. But he was not hit.

When he dropped down among us Ann rested a hand on his shoulder and told him—

"I shall always remember that, Mister Case."

"He smiled broadly and replied—

"Seems to be about all we can do just now."

"Shoot 'em! Kill 'em!" yelled Mercy.

This was excellent advice. So far the savages had had it all their own way. I dropped beside a loophole and held my gun ready.

"One in the door!" cried Mrs. Beverly.

She snatched the mop from Case's hand and, standing at one side, opened the door enough to scrub the arrow loose.

I studied the woods, impatient to strike back at the evil wretches. Above their yowling there sounded a terrible cry which I identified as Bloody-Mouth's yell when he made a kill. The clamor of the savages was suddenly stilled. Then the shouting was renewed most hideously and spread and thinned out through the woods until I knew the bulk of them were hunting for my friend.

"The Cherokee has killed one of them," I announced.

"Blessed words!" cried Mrs. Beverly.

Mercy fairly danced up and down, lunging at imaginary foes with the bayonet and screaming:

"Kill! Kill!"

I suddenly realized that we were enjoying a rest from bullets and arrows, and became active in making the most of the lull. I improved even on Case's scheme for getting water by tying the kettle to the end of the pole by a short length of the cord. Using this as one would use a well-sweep, I drew up several kettles of water without showing myself at the top of the wall, as Case at the loophole told me when the kettle was over the spring. As fast as a kettle was raised Case seized it and permitted the water to run slowly down the logs. We had used three kettles on the south wall and one on the north wall, and were about to elevate another when the firing from the north was resumed.

Then we were visited by a piece of real ill-luck. A bullet, or bullets, smashed the end of the pole and allowed the kettle to drop into the spring. Those of the enemy who were not chasing Bloody-Mouth set up a terrific shouting. Now there was nothing to prevent them from burning our cover and killing us leisurely without the loss of a man on their part.

I heard the door open and jerked my head about in time to see Mercy's skirts disappearing. Too late to draw her back, I reached the partly opened door, stood close to the wall and watched her pass around the corner. The firing on the north side ceased as the mad woman appeared in view of the watchers. If they knew nothing of her sad history there was enough in her ghastly presentment to warn them a manito had rested a hand on her head and that her person was sacred.

From the north loophole Case saw her at the spring and told us of her movements.

"She's taking her time filling the kettle!" he said hoarsely. "Good heavens! Why does she waste time staring around? Now she's forgotten the kettle and is watching the woods. Lord help her! She's walking toward the woods!"

Mrs. Beverly loudly commanded—

"Mercy, you trot back here at once!"

There was no shooting. There was no shouting except as those deep in the woods hunted for the Cherokee. I swarmed up the north wall and saw Mercy running rapidly as if eager to locate the foe. Her white and red face was her protection, and although she disappeared in the growth and was gone from sight for several minutes, yet she reappeared.

I shouted for her to return. She paid no attention until I told her we needed the water. Slowly, as if reluctantly, she came back and attempted to bring us the filled kettle without spilling any. I darted out the door and relieved her of the kettle, and we both were back inside the four walls without ball or arrow being fired.

As we closed the door she panted:

"Kill! Kill all of 'em!"

"You're a good girl, Mercy!" cried Mrs. Beverly. "And we'll kill a likely parcel of them if they'll show their cowardly hides."

Case and I emptied the kettle from the top of the south wall, then we refastened it to the pole and filled it with water without being fired upon.

The woods were quiet, the howling of those hunting for Bloody-Mouth having ceased. Case was quite jubilant and expressed his belief the enemy had withdrawn. But we of the frontier had found that silence on the part of red besiegers usually meant new mischief.

It was Ann who found the first clue to the savages' next maneuver. She was kneeling at the loophole in the east wall when she called out—

"Mister Nolton, please step here."

I joined her and, after taking another look, she whispered—

"Some of that bush growth seems to be nearer."

I took her place, but could see nothing suspicious, nor did I remember the position of the bushes on that side of the cabin.

"You watch for a bit," she urged. "I'll move around and watch from the other holes."

Crouching by the loophole I studied the bushes. After a bit I thought I detected a flicker of motion out of the corner of my eye on the extreme left of the line. By the time I had switched my gaze all, apparently, was as it should be.

Though convinced my imagination was

tricking me I requested the Beverlys and Case to watch from the other walls and I renewed my scrutiny of the bushes.

"Can't see anything. Nothing to look at," grumbled Case. "They've all gone after the Cherokee or else Mercy has scared them off."

Even while he was talking I was positive a bush directly in line with the loophole moved a trifle. It might have been the faint breeze or some small animal or bird that caused the slight agitation. But it had moved. Again from the corner of my eye I fancied I glimpsed a bush on the left advancing a foot.

By this time my nerves were all a-jangle from inaction and suspense. I warned Case:

"Hold your fire. I'm going to shoot."

Working backward so it would not be necessary to betray my purpose by shoving the barrel through the hole, I aimed low at the suspicious bush and fired.

The bush became violently agitated, then collapsed. I yelled to Case to hand me his gun just as a savage began crawling to the woods, dragging one leg behind him. Half a dozen bushes were tossed aside and as many Indians ran to cover, doubled half over and leaping from side to side. Case handed me his gun but before I could select a target a dozen guns began raining bullets into the logs around the loophole. Ann seized my shoulder and pulled me to one side. The wounded man had disappeared by the time I looked again.

"You shouldn't have done that," I rebuked her.

"You spoiled their trick. Why get killed by a chance ball? What would happen to us then?"

"If I could have hit another man they would think long before trying another trick," I explained.

A fresh and welcome diversion came in the scalp-cry of the Cherokee. I could pick it out from the yells of a whole nation. It was instantly and ferociously answered, and I knew my friend had returned to the rear of the besiegers and had made another kill.

That they chased him long and doggedly was shown by the long period of inactivity. An occasional gun barked to remind us men were on every side of the clearing, but there was no volleying, no chorus of howling. They were hunting for my friend in silence, and I could well imagine how his secret assaults must have filled them with dismay. Dumbly we waited for the Indians to charge, and meanwhile the sun climbed high over the clearing and beat down oppressively between the four walls. The wet logs of our shelter rapidly dried.

We endeavored to follow the course of the Cherokee's flight and the pursuit by the faint cries sounding deep in the woods. We failed but were consoled as the minutes passed and there arose no yell of exultation.

Bloody-Mouth was leading his pursuers far. Perhaps he hoped we could find an opportunity to quit shelter and escape into the eastern woods. We would have seriously contemplated such a move if it had not been for the occasional bullet smashing into the log wall, first from one side, then from another, until from each section of the woods had come a warning to us that there was no thoroughfare in that direction.

Case and I made the most of the respite with our old task of drawing water and wetting down the walls. This time there was no interruption beyond a bullet at long intervals. These invariably were fired at the loopholes and not at us even when we exposed a hand or arm.

"How long can this go on this way?" asked Case.

"Until they tire of it, or help comes to drive them off."

"It looks mighty unlikely that we'll git out of this mess," said Mrs. Beverly.

"Oh, none of us is hurt yet," I said encouragingly. "Their howling can't harm us. Their arrows haven't thus far. And they show no liking for a quick charge."

"What about night?" asked Case, innocently enough.

I frowned at him to keep away from

the subject, but he had spoken. Mrs. Beverly told him—

"When it gits dark they'll try mortal hard to creep up to these walls and fire through the holes and set the logs on fire!"

I believed she had the right of it, although savages as a rule dislike to make night attacks. Having tried all day without success, they would prefer to post sentinels to keep us penned in while the main body of them retired to cook meat and have a powwow and renew their medicine. Our only chance, as far as I could see, was to have Bloody-Mouth continue his deadly warfare until he had discouraged them.

I stepped to the door and opened it half-way and took a good look at the western woods. Even as I was standing there a figure burst from the woods and came running to us at full speed.

Snarling with fear and rage, Case ran his gun over my shoulder. I threw the barrel up, shouting for him to cease. The runner was Bloody-Mouth.

The Cherokee was bent far forward, and by his stride, although it was swift, I knew he had traveled far and fast and was beginning to tire. Directing Case to stand by the door and to hold it open a few inches, I swung up on the wall and made ready to cover my friend's retreat.

He was half-way across the opening before a shot was fired. Then several figures broke from cover behind him, shooting as they ran. I threw up my gun and knocked a man off his feet, whereat the others all scrambled back to cover.

By this time the few savages left on the south and north of the opening were discovering an enemy had entered arrow-range. They commenced howling and firing. I dropped my gun and Ann Beverly passed up Case's.

But now there was no one in sight for me to shoot at. Bloody-Mouth was approaching in great bounds, leaping from side to side and displaying great agility. The Indians east of the cabin were slow to discover what all the confusion meant, as the structure partly blocked their view. But I was visible and they commenced firing at me.

I dropped to the ground and took my place at the door, directing Case to reload my gun.

"Got it 'most loaded, mister," cried Mrs. Beverly.

Mercy ducked under my arm, waving the rusty bayonet and ran around the corner, making for the east woods. The firing from that quarter ceased abruptly. I could hear her screaming as she frantically searched for a red man.

Now I observed that Bloody-Mouth was proudly waving two scalps as he ran. He attempted to shout his defiance but could only make a croaking noise. He came through the open door and dropped on the floor. Mercy returned, mumbling under her breath and Case disarmed her as she entered. As she beheld the almost naked figure on the ground she attempted to hurl herself upon it but Ann looped an arm around the painted neck and held her back, while Mrs. Beverly explained the man was our friend and had killed two savages.

Bloody-Mouth held up the two scalps and tossed them at her feet, whereat she became still and quiet and stared down at the gruesome trophies. My friend then crawled to the kettle and drank long and deeply. Having finished he propped himself against the logs in a sitting position. Case and Ann made a round of the loopholes and reported no foe in sight.

Then I dared to sit by my friend. In his own tongue I asked him—

"Will they go away?"

"If they run Giga-tsuhli will follow them," he whispered. "They will not run. More men have come to them from the west. Giga-tsuhli almost ran into them the last time he drew the men after him."

"Reenforcements!" I murmured. Then to him, "Well? Giga-tsuhli is a brave man. Is there any more talk in his bag?"

"He can shake out a few words. They are these: Giga-tsuhli is here to die beside his brother."

Then I lost all hope.

"You are a brave man and my brother," I told him. "You had a chance to get away. You came back here to die. It is good, man of the Wolf People. We have hunted and fought much together. The long path to the west will not seem so long when we walk over it together."

"That is a good talk," he said. "Giga-tsuhli thought he had fooled the wolf-ghosts. They saw his tongue was crooked. They killed the wrong man because Giga-tsuhli said he had shot the wolf. Now they know my brother shot him. So we die. But we shall find more fighting in the Ever Darkening Land."

"We will not tell the women," I warned him. "The night may come so quickly to them they will not know when it happened. Let it be so. When will they come to get us?"

"They will come when the opening loses the sunlight and before it grows black. When it is hard to see a man crawling on the ground, but light enough for them to see the logs. They will crawl in from all sides. They will be over the logs and dropping down on us before we know it. We shall take some of them with us. They shall be our slaves in the Ever Darkening Land."

"The women must not be taken alive. I shall get myself killed after I know they have gone before me," I told him.

"My brother may find that hard to do," he ominously warned. "Their leader will not care to go back empty-handed after losing warriors. They will try hard to take prisoners."

Case broke up our talk, crying:

"Edge of the woods seems to be filled with men! Bushes moving most lively. I believe they're coming! Good-by, every one. Good-by, Ann Beverly."

Dropping on her knees beside me, the girl begged:

"Not alive! That would be too cruel. Don't let them take us alive. It would make me like Aunt Mercy." Then she remembered Case and acknowledged his farewell by rising, giving him her hand, and saying—

"We'll hope we all shall travel far from this terrible place—travel together."

"Let's not talk any more about being licked. They haven't bested us yet," I reminded.

But in my heart I believed it would be over inside of five minutes. And I crawled to a loophole and pushed my gun into the opening.

There was the sound of careless feet crackling in the dead underbrush. Case was right. The savages were lining up for a general assault. Bloody-Mouth touched me with his moccasin and said:

"Look close. See if a man shows himself."

And he caught the top of the wall and drew himself into full view of those hiding in the woods. Sounding his war-cry, he gestured derisively. They did not answer him with word or missile, or show themselves.

In the Mohawk dialect he boasted:

"Giga-tsuhli has thrown away some poor hair taken from dogs. He is tired of killing rabbits in the woods and now will sleep."

This insult was too grave to go unpunished, and in their eagerness to slay several of the savages thrust their arms into sight and fired arrows. Bloody-Mouth jeered at them. He picked an arrow from the top log, disdainfully broke it and shouted:

"Let men stand forward and shoot. Boys should shoot with sticks at birds."

A very tall man bounded into view and aimed his musket. I shot him dead before he could pull the trigger.

Bloody-Mouth howled like a wolf on a game trail and dropped from his dangerous perch just in time to avoid a volley of bullets and arrows. That they had ceased using fire-arrows was evidence that the enemy intended to creep close in the dusk and rush us.

The dead man remained stretched out, face down. Dusky arms were extended to seize his heel and draw him to cover. I called to Case to hand me his gun and passed my own weapon to the Cherokee to reload. A man lunged forward, with head and chest in view. I would surely have shot him had not Mrs. Beverly startled me by crying—

"Oh, merciful Lawd!"

I jerked my head about to see what new danger was on our backs and caught a glimpse of Mercy vanishing through the doorway. Soon she was in range of the loophole in the south wall. She charged the woods with the bayonet just as the dead man glided feet first back into the growth.

As she ran she kept shrieking:

"Kill! Kill! Kill all of 'em!"

And so terrible was her white and red countenance and ghastly smile that the crouching savages held back instead of charging. The enemy gave ground before her attack but she refused to enter the darkening woods. Turning, she ran to the west where several men were crawling into the open. They dared not leap to their feet and run for it, for fear of our bullets. The woman was almost upon them when they got back to cover. She followed them, her thin screams reaching us almost continuously.

From the north, the east, and the south rattled guns; and as the bullets thumped into the logs men from these three sides came on the run, leaping from side to side and filling the clearing with vague zig-zagging shapes.

Bloody-Mouth bellowed his war-cry and took his place near the door, ready to dash out and die ax in hand.

I emptied the three guns at those in the lead on the south side and caused the others to drop to the ground.

"Oh, Lawd! Why let so many come? Hear 'em shooting!" moaned Mrs. Beverly as she crouched against the logs.

"Hear Aunt Mercy!" cried Ann.

The deranged woman was now returning, screaming:

"White men! White men! Kill! Kill all of 'em!"

The gun-fire was stronger than ever. I did not understand why the savages on the ground in the open did not end their work.

"Let's go out and get killed and have it over with!" hoarsely cried Case. And he would have left our shelter had not the Cherokee at the door hurled him back.

We men crouched with guns ready to use as clubs after we had fired our last shot, but no savages appeared at the top of the walls. Instead there came the sound of white men shouting hoarsely. Drawing myself up the logs I beheld a man on a white horse galloping into the clearing from the east with men afoot running behind him.

Those Indians who had not retreated to the woods leaped to their feet and frantically raced for the timber. They yelled to each other as they began a retreat which was not to end until it had crossed the Laurel Mountain.

Mrs. Beverly was moaning—

"We thank Thee, O Lawd!"

White men were streaming by us to attack the woods on all sides. Some carried long axes as well as guns. Bloody-Mouth had vanished. He was already in the woods seeking frightened victims. Bidding the women keep inside, Case and I went out.

The man on the white horse galloped up to us. He introduced himself as Major Peachey, in command of a small band of bush-cutters sent by Colonel George Washington to repair the road from Fort Cumberland to the crossing of the Savage river. Fortunately for us he had decided to examine the road beyond the Savage and some of his scouts had caught the muffled sound of gun-firing.

As he finished his explanation Bloody Mouth came from the woods and I had to cry to the men not to harm him. When the Cherokee came up he pointed to the horse and told us:

"The Far Indians are afraid of that horse. They said General Braddock's ghost was riding it and came here to kill them."

"General Braddock did ride a white horse the day he was killed," said the major, "but the animal was captured and taken up near Detroit somewhere.* But get your people out here. I see you have women. They can take turns riding the horse. We're too small a party to stay here longer than necessary."

The peril over, I felt strangely weak. Mrs. Beverly and her daughter came out and thanked Major Peachey. While the men were returning the three of us told him something of our experiences.

"But where is your sister?" he asked.

Mrs. Beverly shouted her name. There was no answer. I began to fear one of the rescuers had glimpsed her painted face and shot her by mistake. I asked Bloody-Mouth to search for her. He shook his head and firmly replied:

"The white woman is safe. The ghosts will keep her from being hurt. Gigatsuhli will go and hunt for French warriors in the woods, but not for that white woman."

Major Peachey began calling to his men to look for her.

He was still shouting when Mercy made a dramatic entrance into the clearing. She was preceded by a savage who ran with a decided limp. She had chased him from some patch of cover and was pursuing him in silence with the rusty bayonet clutched in both hands.

The wounded savage realized he could not escape, that his fear of the demented woman had driven him into a trap. He fell heavily and aimed his gun at Bloody-Mouth, now running to meet him. The Cherokee leaped to one side, and I felt as if some one had hit me with a club on the shoulder.

All were watching the race between Mercy and the Cherokee. The latter won. He barely had time to tear off the scalp before he was fleeing, with Mercy raging after him.

Then I informed Major Peachy—

"I believe I've been shot."

CHAPTER XI

SHADOWS LIFT

NEVER did a campaign start more blindly. At least that was my opinion as I remained inactive at Fort Cumberland nursing a poisonous wound through my right shoulder and listening to the gossip and speculations of Colonel Washington's Virginians stationed there.

My hurt ordinarily would not have been so serious, nor do I for a moment think the ball was poisoned purposely, but the fact is that I had a high fever and was a sick man before reaching the Potomac. I must have been very ill, as my recollections of that last stretch of the journey are confused and blurred. I recall Ann's solicitude in trying to persuade me to ride Major Peachey's horse and how she placed a cool hand on my forehead. I have a vague recollection that Case was walking beside me and cupping his hand under my elbow to steady my steps, and I think I disliked his kindly effort to help me. I also remember his sitting beside my pallet of blankets, fanning me with his hat and telling me he was going north. That was after I reached the fort, but I have no remembrance of arriving there.

My memory began to clear up when Major Peachey told me the three women were going to Carlisle by the way of the Conococheague. As he left the room the Beverlys and Mercy came in. Mrs. Beverly was affected to tears, so kindly was she of heart. Mercy stroked my head, her smile never changing, and Ann pressed my hand and assured me they would never leave me if not for the surgeon's insistence that I was on the quick road to recovery and that the fort was no place for women. After they left the room she ran back to me and said:

"You understand, Mr. Nolton, I'd never leave you like this if I didn't believe you'd soon be well and if the officers didn't tell us we must go back to the settlements. You understand mother would never leave you if she didn't feel the same as I do. But they say the army will soon come along to march to the Ohio and that we women will be in the way.”

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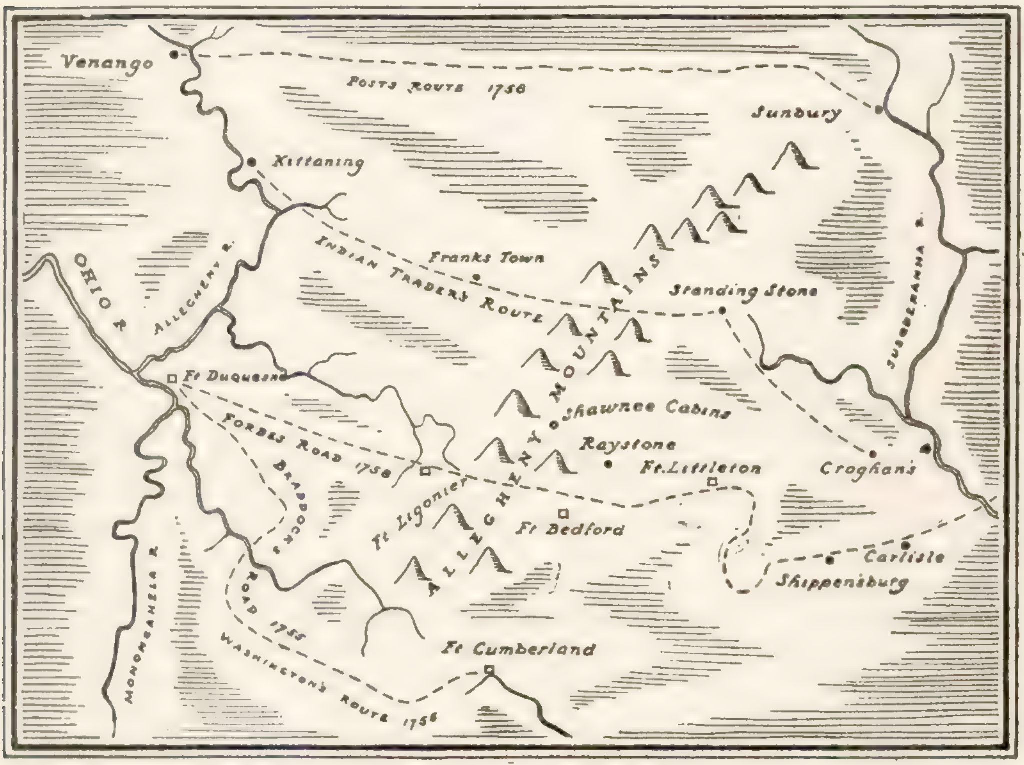
*Captain Thomas Morris, sent by General Bradstreet on a mission into the Illinois country in the summer of 1764, saw Braddock's white charger on September 5th. See Morris' Journal, p. 311, Vol. I., "Early Western Travels."

Beginning with that day the fog left my mind and left me clear-headed, but with a woful feeling of weakness. It did seem that my life was all but sapped out of me. I had no patience with myself as I sprawled in the sun, a wasted hulk, and cursed the random shot that had punished me so vilely after the fight was won. Major Peachey took pains to say he had had to drive the women away, so determined were they to remain and nurse me. After dragging myself into the hot sun I supposed I would recuperate rapidly, but for some reason beyond the ken of the surgeon my lassitude continued. Of course, my useless fretting helped me none.


Venango
Posts Route 1758
Sunbury
Kittaning
Franks Town
Indian Traders Route
Allegheny Mountains
Standing Stone
Ohio R
Allegheny R
Susquehanna R
Ft Duquesne
Shawnee Cabins
Raystone
Ft. Littleton
Croghan's
Forbes Road 1758
Braddock's Road 1755
Ft Ligonier
Ft Bedford
Carlisle
Shippensburg
Monongahela R
Ft Cumberland
Washington's Route 1758

I had no recollection of seeing Bloody-Mouth since our departure from the ruined cabin where I was wounded. When I asked Major Peachey about him I was greatly surprized to be told my red friend had been with me throughout the journey and had kept about the fort until assured I was out of danger.

“Now he’s away scouting. Perhaps he’s at Raystown,” said the major.

Then I remembered I must make a report of what I had learned during my captivity. Provided with paper and ink, I laboriously set down my discoveries and addressed it to Major Andrew Lewis, Campingtown, Philadelphia. It was sent over the Fort Frederick road together with reports for General Forbes. Case and the women had told the major much of our experiences but he had heard nothing of Fincer’s charges against Ensign Petny.

Now came the slow, tedious work of fighting back to health. My progress was retarded by my impatience. It was during this waiting on health that I heard much camp gossip and formed the opinion the campaign was heading nowhere.

General Braddock, at the least, had known what he purposed doing. But our army was scattered from Philadelphia, along the Carlisle road, at Raystown and at Fort Cumberland. Young Colonel Washington made Fort Cumberland his headquarters. Colonel Bouquet was stationed at Raystown and was drilling his troops in the woods, so Joseph Shippen wrote a friend at our post. General Forbes had not advanced beyond Carlisle.

From the general speculation and tittle-tattle I got the impression no one knew when or where the different units were to be merged into an army, or whither the united forces would march.

Colonel Washington arrived after the women left the fort and sought me out, although I was able to wait on him. He talked most sympathetically and kindly. He was very curious to learn how we fared in crossing the Laurel Mountain. His interest waned when I told him we had passed the ridge far down and near the Braddock road.

After that, whenever he was in camp, I frequently saw him, and there was scarcely a time he did not pause to ask about my health and express his wish for my complete and speedy recovery. Nor was he above quizzing me as to my choice of a route to Fort Duquesne. I unhesitatingly named the Braddock road, as it already was cut.

It's the one way, Nolton," he firmly declared. "It was a trap for General Braddock, but it need not be one for us. The meadows furnish more and better forage than the grass at the foot of the ridge on the Raystown road. There will be no trouble in crossing the rivers. I crossed the Youghiogheny with a body of troops after thirty days of rain, and had no difficulty. We can easily avoid the Monongahela. There are no defiles the army can not traverse. And there can be no new road that doesn't pass through worse defiles. You're familiar with the western country. I wish others were."

"Some may insist a new road can be cut that will be shorter," I remarked.

"It's so said already. But there can't be any question as to the advisability of following a hundred and forty-five miles of road already made rather than to take a new route which necessitates the cutting of a hundred miles of road over almost impassable mountains."

"Is there any serious question as to the army marching by General Braddock's road?" I asked.

"I think so. I hope it will be settled to the satisfaction of General Forbes and that the army will come this way."

That was my first definite intimation that the choice of a route to Duquesne was still undecided. I learned much as I lounged in the sun, talking with officers and listening to the gossip of the men.

I learned that the main body of the Highlanders had not arrived in Philadelphia until the end of the first week in June, and that the army stores and artillery for the expedition had not arrived from England until the middle of June. Although General Forbes arrived in Philadelphia early in the spring he was leaving the seaboard three weeks later than Braddock had left from Fort Cumberland before.

Practically all of Colonel Washington's regiment were staunch Virginians and had but small love for their Pennsylvania brothers. They insisted it had been Virginia pluck and money which developed the fur trade on the Ohio, and Virginia rifles that opposed the encroachments of the French. It was not in human nature for them to approve of Penn's Colony receiving a present of a shorter and more direct route to the Ohio. If fate, in the guise of military exigence, should provide the northern Colony with this new road it was more than she deserved. Thus argued the rank and file of Washington's men. But more substantial, to my way of thinking, was the insistence that the expedition would be best served by following the road already cut through to within six miles of Duquesne.

However, the fact remained that the army was slowly gathering at Raystown, with no new troops coming down to the Potomac. Already Colonel Washington had three hundred men cutting a road from Fort Cumberland to Raystown, thirty-four miles north of us, but none of us knew whether the forces under Bouquet were to fall down over this new road to the Potomac, or whether Washington's regiment was to follow it north and abandon the Braddock road. The weight of opinion, influenced much by hope, was against the latter possibility.

The men, like their leader, had thought only for the one objective, Fort Duquesne. In their minds the one question was how the army could reach the Ohio fork in the shortest possible time. I could not understand how any man with military intelligence could hesitate for a moment in naming the more preferable route.

To add to our bewilderment an express from Raystown brought a letter from Bouquet to Washington stating that scouts were out in three directions, for the purpose of finding suitable crossings of the several ranges. One band was along the Braddock road, another on the Old Trading Path from Raystown west, and the third on the upper path to the Allegheny by the way of Frank's Town. This express told us woodsmen that Bouquet was anxious to cross Laurel Mountain so as to leave the Youghiogheny on his left, and that the reconnaissance over the northern path was for the possible purpose of falling on the French fort at Venango, a project that appealed strongly to General Forbes.

Also it was of common knowledge that Sir John Sinclair was still insisting on the Braddock road and that Forbes had urged Colonel Bouquet to lose no time in repairing that route as far as the Youghiogheny crossing. This satisfied us for a time that the troops at Raystown would march down to the Potomac. A few days later we were telling each other that our general was planning to move the army direct to Laurel Mountain from Raystown instead of falling down to the Potomac. Thus our theories were formed only to be exploded. Nevertheless, the quartermaster-general, Sir John, had stored forage only at Fort Cumberland.

JULY was nearly ended and still I was far from strong when the pack-horse trains reached Raystown with no one knowing for a certainty where they would next travel. The Virginians' hopes were dashed when it was learned that Major Armstrong and a hundred men were marking a new road over the Alleghenies. Virginia's hopes were further reduced when Colonel Washington was ordered to have two companies of road-builders ready to cut a wagon-path once a route other than Braddock's was decided upon. I decided to offer myself as scout for these men in event my health should permit.

One of my new friends, a Virginia frontiersman, who had spent several years in the country between the Kanawha and the Monongahela, dryly assured me:

"It ain't your health that'll keep you from scouting for us, Nolton. It'll be old age. Some forty or fifty years from now you'll be hobbling around leaning on a staff and asking what road we're going to take."

This bit of nonsense caused much amusement. But there was no laughter when the men turned the talk to a discussion of the Quakers' and Pennsylvania's apathy in developing or protecting their frontiers.

Next there came rumors of our general's dissatisfaction with Sir John for jumping about in his conclusions. I recalled the conversation I had overheard at Campingtown between Sir John and Colonel Bouquet after I had received what seemed must be a lifelong disappointment.

Now Elizabeth Joy was to me a woman of dreams, rather than an actuality, but Sir John's declaration that a new road must be cut to Raystown was as vivid as if overheard only yesterday. From the first the quartermaster-general had insisted on Raystown's being the rendezvous for the gathering army. Now he was being severely scored for failing to provide depots of supplies other than those of forage on the Potomac. And July had but a few days to go. And yet, while there is no question as to Sir John's being an egregious blunderer and as to his causing endless annoyance to our general, he had been right when he first held that any converging of troops at Fort Cumberland should be over the roads that passed through settled portions of the country. His belief that the Braddock road would be used explains the storage of supplies there.

That he announced himself as favoring this route after an interview with Governor Sharpe suggests that his preference resulted from pressure exercised by Maryland and Virginia men.

So the messengers came and went, bringing letters from Bouquet and carrying Colonel Washington's recommendations back to that office. Bouquet, in turn, passed the correspondence on to General Forbes. By this time the whole army knew that our general was a very sick man. The army started to move in June and the general had managed to follow as far as Carlisle. It was even said that he would never live to overtake the troops. This fear caused much depression among us waiting down on the Potomac. The shadow of Duquesne was upon us and every attempt to march against the place seemed to be blighted.

My new friend from the Kanawha country expressed much of my own feelings when he confided to me:

"All the boys are thinking of what happened three years ago. Braddock did manage to git nigh to the cursed place. Gineral Forbes is too sick and too cautious. The only ones in the whole army that knows how to fight Injuns are right here in this fort. T'others, from the gineral down to drummer-boys, don't know nothing about it. If he'd just turn young Washington loose with his regiment we'd scamper along and clean up that —— plague-spot without any fuss or fixings."

We of the border were inclined to think this. Washington had urged Braddock to split his force when within striking distance of the fort, to eliminate pomp and drums, to hurl twenty-five hundred light troops forward and have the job finished. We had small patience with the Continental system of maneuvering that had made such a ghastly business of the 1755 campaign.

Yet there was a great difference between Braddock and Forbes. The former had listened to no suggestions from provincials. His Majesty's Guards could march anywhere, do anything.

"General Forbes is willing to learn," I told my friend. "He listens to the talk of border men. He approves of Colonel Bouquet's plan to have some of his men dress like Indians. Braddock never would allow that."

"True 's sin. Our Colonel James Burd has some of his best fighters togged out like Injuns. I'll strip and paint if we ever git to the fighting. But there's no knowing when the gineral can quit Carlisle. No use fretting over that, however. Army can't move till we have a road. Can't move then unless that Sinclair gits wagons and pack-horses enough."

"We'll have a road. General Forbes will go with his army the minute the road is ready," I assured.

"Mebbe. But we're slower'n turtles in gitting started. Winter'll find us still waiting to do something. Some of the boys are keen to git back to their famblies. I left my woman to look after a small field of crops and keep watch of the children."

The day following this talk Colonel Washington invited me to go with him half way to Raystown over the new road his men had cut. He was to meet and confer with Colonel Bouquet. I was delighted, and suddenly discovered my strength was rapidly returning. The colonel and his party were mounted but I walked from choice to toughen my legs.

During the journey the colonel rode beside me for a bit, or long enough to ask—

"You are attached to Major Lewis' command?"

"It was he who sent me scouting. I was out for you last year."

"I might have prior claim to your services but nearly all my men are trained woodsmen like yourself. If you can be of more service at Raystown you should go there. But we'll see."

Less than twenty miles up the new road we found Colonel Bouquet and small guard waiting for us. Without any delay the two leaders sat down on a log and got down to the business of the conference. The men of the two parties mingled and exchanged news at one side. The two colonels talked with the utmost frankness. Occasionally one or the other would call a man by name and ask his advice on the passes over the various mountain ranges.

Finally Colonel Bouquet insisted—

"It isn't a question of leading a party to the Ohio but of moving an army."

Washington replied:

"I can see no advantage in trying to reach the Ohio by a new way and over a road not yet cut. The season is well advanced. We scarce have time to tread a beaten path. I believe we'll be compelled to halt at Laurel Mountain and go into winter quarters. If that results the campaign will fail most miserably. The southern Indians will turn against us if they see the army held in the mountains. The Ohio Delawares will leave their mats to go to the French once they think we've failed. The unprotected settlements will again be desolated."

"I will determine the straightest line from Raystown over the Alleghenies. I will have the turnings of the road marked in reaching the top. Then it will be for General Forbes to decide if it is well to risk such a route. I understand all the advantages of a route already opened. I know, Colonel, you are animated by a sincere zeal to contribute to the success of this expedition. You are convinced a straight route is impracticable for packhorses because of the mountains. I want to be convinced of that fact."

"I will most cheerfully work on any road, pursue any route or enter upon any service that the general or yourself may think me usefully employed in. You have desired me to speak my sentiments freely and I have done so. I still am convinced, after talking with all my guides and others who have a knowledge of the country, that a road to be compared with General Braddock's, or even one fit for packhorses, can not be made this season. I do not know what reports you've received from your reconnoitering parties, but from what I have been told I believe you will be disappointed if you expect a tolerable road by Raystown. Any movement that way will destroy our horses."

"The whole matter is one for General Forbes to pass upon. If you will reduce your convictions to writing I will forward the same to him. I will mark a road to the top of the mountains so he may have all our knowledge on the whole question."

This ended the interview and the two parties prepared for an immediate return to Raystown and the Potomac.

With one foot in the stirrup Colonel Washington motioned me to advance. He told me:

"Nolton, I've spoken to Colonel Bouquet about your case. He needs your services more than I do. You will ride north with him. Colonel Bouquet, I have always found this man willing and capable in any work I have set him to." And he grasped my hand and pressed it warmly.

"I shall be glad to have him," said Bouquet. "God knows we have enough of the other kind. Nolton, Colonel Washington tells me you have been ill. He has told something of your experience. You shall have a horse to ride."

He would have dismounted one of his men, but I begged permission to walk and assured him I would arrive at Raystown not too long after he had completed the ride. And I spoke within the truth, for some of his horsemen were in sight when I wearily made the rendezvous.

But, believing the Braddock route was as good as abandoned, my heart was heavy. It was disheartening to one who could not know General Forbes' broader plans and greater responsibilities. Like myself, young Colonel Washington could not know just what problems confronted our general. We had thought only for a quick dash at Duquesne and its reduction. Forbes was a veteran of Continental wars and appreciated the difference between moving an army and leading a troop.

Nor did I take into consideration the fact ours was only one of three simultaneous campaigns and that the three were linked together. The possibility of an express arriving at any hour with orders for our general to withdraw his army from Pennsylvania and hasten to the assistance of Abercrombie or Sir William Johnson never entered my mind. In truth, when word was brought of Abercrombie's blunder and heavy loss of men, including the death of gallant Lord Howe, the Duquesne expedition was within an inch of being abandoned.

All of us provincials did not understand this phase of Forbes' perplexing problems and realize the supreme importance of our venture's proceeding by the most direct route possible so as to maintain the shortest line of communication with the northern Colonies.

Despite our belief that the matter was practically settled against the advice of Washington and others, Colonel Bouquet was in a sad state of mind. Immediately after the interview with Washington he pessimistically informed our general that the position of the army was most "cruel" if it were reduced to a single line of communication. And after renaming the disadvantages of the Braddock road he declared he did not have enough axes to open a new route.

ON THE very day Bouquet sent his discouraging report to the sick general it was decided to start cutting a new road. This was the last day of July, and it was well a decision was reached. Our army was a collection of regulars, militia and Royal Americans. Many of the provincials were unruly under any form of discipline. I had not been in Raystown an hour before I discovered some who had never fired a gun in their lives. I saw some of the new levies armed with old Queen Anne muskets. I saw others armed with walking-sticks or clubs. It was Bouquet's arduous task to whip the raw material into shape, drill them in bush fighting at the same time he was rushing the work on the new road.

Late that first night I met Case. No longer could he be called "Dandy" Case. Had he not accosted me I should scarcely have recognized him. He wore coarse breeches and moccasins. His stockingless legs were scratched and bruised. He wore a coat some officer had discarded. It had no buttons, nor any military markings. Around his head, like a turban, was a piece of red cloth.

As I held his hand and stared at him, my tongue tied, he said—

"These are the rewards of virtue."

My first question was—

"How are you called?"

" 'Case.' It happens to be my real name. I've worn it when I was in sin. I'll wear it now I have reformed." He smiled, and there was glint of insincerity in his eyes. "It's safe. There are two more of the name here, and either looks more the dandy than I do."

"What branch of the service are you in?"

"I'm a universal. I am a hostler. I help with the cooking. I fetch wood. Look at my poor legs! Soon I shall be building an elegant carriage road over the mountains."

"You are serving the Colonies. You are doing well," I told him.

"No canting, no whining, no sermonizing, my friend," he replied. "In a hollow tree, not far away, are some Rhode Island bills. They were sewed in the lining of my coat. Had they taken me to Montreal I should have passed them. I've reformed until this expedition is finished. If I return alive I'll see how hard life uses me. I may never visit my hidden currency, and I may. There's some one else here you know. He doesn't recognize me as the Old England man."

"Petny?" I cried.

He shook his head.

"Not a sign of Petny here. I speak of Old Gormet. And there's another, most eager to get to the fighting. You'd never guess. John Fairden. He joined the army with Gormet. You'll be scouting, I suppose."

We talked at some length and he secured some food from a friendly cook and until early morning we visited. Not until he was leaving me did he ask the question I had been expecting from the moment we met.

"Where is Ann Beverly?"

I could only tell him they had started for Carlisle. Whether they had halted there or gone on across the Susquehanna I did not know. His last words at parting were:

"I'm doing real work and do not like it. But the French must be whipped if only to preserve my hunting-grounds. See you in the morning."

It was morning when he left me. After sunrise I could not find him. A considerable body of men had started at sunrise to commence marking the road over the Allehgenies and I had no doubt he was with them.

A most agreeable surprize was the arrival of Bloody-Mouth at midday. He came with some sixty Cherokees, and their arrival added a picturesque touch to what already was a patchwork of color and animation. Their leader would talk only with Colonel Burd, whose men were stripped and painted as fiercely as were the newcomers. With Bloody-Mouth as an interpreter the leader of the Cherokees announced his men would go with the army, provided the Braddock road was the route. Otherwise they would go back home. Colonel Burd reported this to Bouquet, who in turn reported to General Forbes, and our general was mightily displeased at the insolence of the "rascals" in presuming to dictate to His Majesty's army.

After the powwow I got the Cherokee to one side and asked for news. He told me:

"My people will not go with the army over the new road. It is too far from the paths leading to their homes. They will stay until they have received presents and rum. Then they will go away. They will not help the French. They have sent a talk to the Ohio Indians to keep out of the army's path so they won't be hurt. The Delawares and Shawnees will not leave their mats to help the French. The snow is too near for the army to reach Duquesne unless it runs. If it crawls it will be caught in the mountains and die."

"You can go back to your people?"

"The path is brushed clean. Giga-tsuhli can go. A Raven Mocker has killed a very strong shaman who wanted to bury me in the black ground and make my spirit turn blue. Now Giga-tsuhli can go home. My brother will go ahead of the army?"

"I shall scout, carry orders, whatever will help."

"The man of the Wolf People was hungry to see the old places. He has waited long. He will wait longer. He will go with his brother through the woods."

I agreed with my friend as to the danger of making a late start to the Ohio. Although repeatedly urging Sir John to greater efforts our general was in no great haste to move the army. While he never intended to waste as much time as he did, yet the result of our lagging was in one respect fortunate.

It gave that brave Moravian missionary, Frederick Post, time to visit the Indians on Beaver creek, to withdraw them from the French influence and secure their attendance at the great council in Easton before their suspicions could flame into passion because of an army penetrating their country. During this waiting, also, Bradstreet had time to capture Fort Frontenac and intercept the supplies daily expected and sorely needed by Ligneris, commandant at the Fork.

Once I had gotten my bearings and had had my talk with Bloody-Mouth I inquired concerning Ensign Petny, and was surprized that none had heard of his alleged treachery. As he had not been at Raystown I assumed he was with General Forbes at Carlisle.

I told the whole story to Colonel Bouquet, who heard it with lowering brows. When I finished he said:

"It shall be looked into. His accuser was a murderer by his own tale. There must be some substantiation of Fincer's charges if the ensign denies it. But you have done well, sir, and it shall be looked into."

Now came bad news. General Forbes had been held by illness in Carlisle from early July to August eleventh, and had traveled as far as Shippensburg on the latter date. And the army now knew he was ill again, but none of us ever imagined he would be a helpless invalid in Shippensburg until the middle of September. As it was, Raystown was buried in gloom. We believed the work ahead demanded a leader who was physically fit.

I was glad to be detailed for scouting duty ahead of Sir John's workmen. The Cherokee went with me.

It did not take us long to overtake Sir John, as he had not reached the Alleghenies. I found him fuming and cursing and declaring the work was "diabolical" and insisting it would take five hundred men five days to cut to the top of the mountains. My work here was of a perfunctory nature as there were no enemy signs to be discovered although I scouted over the ridge. Then the Cherokee and I shot game for the kettles.

ABOUT a week after my arrival I was making my usual report to Sir John when he received a letter from General Forbes. He broke off his talk with me to read it, and then forgot me, and exploded violently. From his indignant apostrophe directed to the tops of the gloomy pines, I surmised General Forbes had written to suggest that a small road be carried along a hundred yards from the military road on both sides and parallel to it, for the use of flanking parties. The two additional paths were to be bushed sufficiently to accommodate men afoot and mounted.

Sir John concluded his outburst by exclaiming:

"By ——! How many roads must we have to move this collection of horse-jockeys, Indian traders, and broken inn-keepers?"

He criticized and blamed every one impartially. Almost all his remarks were riddled with volleys of oaths. He so worked upon the nerves of Lieutenant Colonel Stephen of Virginia that that irate officer vowed he would rather break his sword than to serve any longer under such a man. He was placed under arrest and Major Andrew Lewis came up to succeed him in command. At the first opportunity I gained audience with Major Lewis and learned he never had received my report about Petny. He was gone from Philadelphia before I sent it and it never had overtaken him. So I told him the whole story.

"It's too bad," he remarked. "Petny was in trouble of some kind. We all knew that. But we believed it was about gaming debts. He returned from the Conococheague and reported that Fincer had deserted, Then he disappeared. I had the town searched but could not find him. When we have a breathing spell we'll try to find him. He's probably hiding in Philadelphia or New York. Now, Nolton, you're to leave us. I'm sorry. But you can do more for us farther ahead. The general orders Colonel James Burd to command on the west side of Laurel Mountain and to march there without delay, and to build a stockade at Loyalhannon. You will go with him."

"May the Cherokee, Bloody-Mouth, go with me?"

"We need Indian scouts most desperately. Will he stay with us after you've gone?"

"I am afraid he will not, sir."

Major Lewis smiled grimly and said:

"Take him along. But the Lord only knows when you will see the army again. We're moving terribly slow. We're expecting more Virginia road-builders daily and hope to make better progress once they join us."

"Many of them helped cut Braddock's road. They'll work hard and fast, sir."

"Some of our men here are keen to fight but will kill time when it comes to this kind of work. Others are willing to make roads, but aren't fit for the work. Like that man." And he nodded to where a disheveled figure was trying to grub out a root that had anchored a mighty pine to the mountain side. The man was Case.

After leaving the major I found a chance to speak with Case and advise him to cease working on the root and to be satisfied with cutting off the portion showing on the surface. He smeared more dirt on his face in brushing back his hair, straightened painfully and sighed:

"This is the reward of virtue! Nolton, if you'd break your back for a week as I have done you'd be glad to turn highwayman. Do you know hard work has turned more men from the narrow path than all the preachers can win back?"

"This is the worst part of it," I consoled. "At least you're in little danger of losing your hair, as were the road-cutters ahead of Braddock."

"Another man's hard luck never made my lot seem any easier," he sighed. "However, I've left that Rhode Island paper currency far behind in the hollow tree. But I'm doing this because the French are trying to spoil my hunting-grounds, not because I'm regenerated."

By this time, late August, many connected with the army and possessing the capacity to observe our tardy advance were convinced young Colonel Washington had exaggerated none when he stated the obstacles to be overcome in hewing a new road through the wilderness. Huge trees toppled and crashed through the lesser growth to the forest floor and must be cut into sections and removed. Ledges must be blasted away. Open frameworks filled with stones must be extended as supporting walls where it was otherwise impossible to secure the necessary width. In the valleys wet ground presented different problems and logs had to be placed crossways to afford a way for the wagons. And for much of the distance the forest was so dense the range of vision was limited to sixty feet.

Colonel Bouquet sent by my hand a letter to Sir John, who was now over the mountains and at Stony Creek. I found him camped within a mile or so of the spot where De la Rue had camped at the time we prisoners escaped. After reading the letter Sir John broke into a tirade, and from his vehement utterances I knew Colonel Bouquet had expressed great disappointment because the road had not reached the foot of Laurel Mountain.

Sir John, oblivious to my presence, walked back and forth and exclaimed:

"'Push that road with all possible dispatch?' ——, what am I doing but that? And such a rabble to work with! Huh! 'Everybody is to stir', eh? One would think I was pleasuring in a fair country! 'Unaccountable slowness.' Bah! So easy to tell others what they should do. If ever there was a forlorn piece of work it's this business of making a road through this miserable, God-forsaken country fit only for wild beasts and red hunters, and to accomplish it with these rag-tags of humanity. Here, you! What are you waiting for?"

"I am on my way to join Colonel Burd's party. I waited to see if I could carry any message for you."

"No. If your business is to join Colonel Burd you'd better be about it."

His rough ways had no hurt for me. He classed his workers as "rag-tag," and undoubtedly there were many undesirables among them. Yet there they were, Case among them, sharing all the dangers of men advancing ahead of an army. And heaven knows their physical plight was sorry enough. It is not necessary to add that the bulk of the men associated with Sir John were honest, heroic men, who would have preferred being treed by Indians to delving and digging and hewing and carrying amid the torment of insects and in the heat of a broiling sun. Sir John, choleric and explosive, amused me, as far as one so slothful in performing a vital duty can amuse. It made much difference that I was not one of his workmen. I could easily understand how his constant upbraiding and fault-finding, and cursing got on the nerves of men already worn to the bone. I was glad to get away from his ungracious presence.

Before I quit camp, however, he sent for me and gave me a line for Colonel Burd. He was pleasant enough in asking me to deliver it in all haste. This was the order for Colonel Burd to commence cutting back from Loyalhannon, as the chief objective at this time was to establish a protected line of communication to that place. The colonel also was ordered to permit no beating of drums or firing of guns. The last was scarcely necessary to a man like Burd, who knew the border.

Now the Cherokee and I were diverging from the line of our escape from the Frenchman. The trail left by Burd's men, although he had not paused to cut any road, was easy to follow even at dusk, and for much of the way Bloody-Mouth and I covered it at a run. I rejoiced to find myself entirely recovered from my sickness. We plunged into the laurel thickets of the ridge. We made the crossing without seeing any signs of the enemy. And when we descended the western slope I had changed my opinion to this extent: Did the army cross where we had crossed the Laurel Mountain would present greater difficulties to the road-builders than had the Alleghenies.

A fourth of a mile from the western base of the ridge we found Colonel Burd's camp at Loyalhannon. This was an old Indian town on the trail to Shannopin's town at the Ohio fork and was half-way between the French fort and Raystown. It was situated in a wide, fertile bottomland on the north side of the creek of the same name. Bloody-Mouth called it Laurel-hanne and said it meant, in the Delaware tongue, "the middle stream," being half-way between the Juniata at Raystown and the Ohio at the forks. Signs of red occupancy were numerous, but the Indians had left their ancient seats never to return except in passing. Some fifty miles away was Fort Duquesne. The direct course thither would be through an opening later called "Miller's Run Gap," then back to the creek again at the Big Bottom.*

Colonel Burd at once had us before him and, after reading Sir John's letter, told us his scouts had brought information which we must take back to Colonel Bouquet at once. This was a keen disappointment and I doubt if the Cherokee would have returned to the army if not for his loyalty to me. But the colonel had learned that the enemy were busily securing the crossings and defiles along the western part of the Braddock road. This was good news to carry to the army, as it was proof the French thus far had but little knowledge of our actual movements.

We remained a night, secured rations of cooked meat and started east in the morning just as Burd's men turned out to commence cutting back to meet Sir John's workmen.

When we reached Sir John's men we found them in quite a cheerful mood and learned Sir John was absent, supposedly gone to Easton to secure six hundred wagons.

At this stage of the journey I met Old Gormet, who was serving as a hunter. He had changed none and rejoiced at seeing me. He babbled much about his grandson in the north, and vowed he would have a string of hair that would put the youngster to shame. I asked for John Fairden and he told me:

"John lives just to git even. He won't build roads. He can't scout and don't like hunting. Says he's an angel of destruction sent by the Lord against Duquesne. Just nurses his musket and, when they'll let, sits for hours staring to the west and waiting. All I ask is to be beside John when he goes into action. I've a notion he'll do rare work."

The Cherokee and I hurried on, now able to take advantage of the road. As we traveled it did seem as if the road could not be finished before the first autumnal rains came to undo what had been done. Already experience had taught us that where the first wagon of a train can pass easily it is more difficult for the second; and after a score have cut up the ground, repairs are necessary before more can be let through. This hindrance would be multiplied many fold once the steady, heavy rains began.

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*Latrobe on the Penn. Central. The main trail was parallel to and a few miles north of this railway.

We delivered Colonel Burd's message to Colonel Bouquet and after a day's rest were ordered to turn around and scout for Major Grant's troops, about to march over the ridges to the Loyalhannon to cover Burd's road-builders. By the second day of September we had flung a force of fifteen hundred men over the mountains to Loyalhannon creek. The stockade was up when we arrived and was named Fort Ligonier, after Marshal Ligonier, under whom Forbes had served in Continental campaigns.

For some time Grant of Ballendalloch had been urging Colonel Bouquet to permit him to make a demonstration against Fort Duquesne with some of Montgomery's Highlanders. He argued that such a move would depress the spirits of the French and simplify the work of the army when it came up. Bouquet was as cautious as he was brave and dashing when in action, and it was a surprize for us who had seen him to learn Major Grant was to have his wish.

IMMEDIATELY all was excitement and anticipation along the Loyalhannon. The demonstration—"reconnaissance" was Bouquet's order—came as a most welcome relief from working and suffering with never a foe to fire a gun at. We had worried much about the road, but we had never dreamed of any serious opposition once we came up to the fort. I considered myself very lucky to be accepted as a scout. Of course Bloody-Mouth went with me.

There were eight hundred men, regulars and militia, in the force that followed Major Grant from his camp on the Kiskiminitis near Loyalhannon. Not one of us for a moment believed we would meet with any serious opposition. Grant told his officers that the enemy's garrison, counting both French and Indians, did not exceed two hundred fighting men. We were a small army.

The Cherokee and I scouted well ahead and found no signs of the foe. I was convinced that the fort would be completely surprized. On the third day from camp we were within eleven miles of Duquesne, and never a hunter nor scout of the enemy did we in the advance discover.

The troops halted until three o'clock in the afternoon and then proceeded to within two miles of the fort. At this point the baggage was dropped for Captain Bullitt, two subalterns and fifty men to guard. These men did not relish their ill-luck in being left behind. One hour from midnight we were on a densely wooded hill,* less than half a mile from the fort. The darkness and the woods hid us from any watchful eyes.

The Cherokee and I separated, scouting close to the fort. I heard sounds as if the savages were singing, and the occasional voice of a Frenchman. It was dark and fog from the river was filling the low land. I returned with nothing to report except that the enemy were inside the stockade and apparently unsuspicious of our presence.

Major Grant was in high humor and Major Lewis said:

"They'll be mightily surprized in the morning. I wouldn't be surprized if the savages ran in a panic and the French ran up the white flag."

"The Indians may quit, but Ligneris won't run away without making some kind of a fight," warned Lewis. "Had he known a few hours ago you were coming he might have abandoned the place. He won't surrender without testing our mettle. And most likely he'll realize this is only a reconnoitering party."

"We came to reconnoiter, but we can take what is waiting to be taken," said Grant.

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* Grant's Hell.

Even then it was not suspected that his high ambition was prompting him to capture the fort and snatch the laurels of the campaign before Forbes could get half-way to the Fork.

Shortly after Grant had offered us an inkling of his climbing desires, which we did not take at face value, the Cherokee came in. He had a talk but would not open the bag unless I acted as his interpreter. Through me he told Grant there were many strange Indians inside the stockade. The commander may have been skeptical, for he asked me direct if I had discovered any signs of savage reenforcements. I replied that the huts outside the stockade seemed to be unoccupied, but that I had heard Indians singing inside and in a tongue I did not understand.

The two of us were dismissed. Grant told his officers that a few more red foes would make no difference. It was now becoming obvious to many of us that our reconnaissance was to be pushed until it became something more important. I know that Major Grant was all enthusiasm and confidence that dark night on the hill. Looking backward over the judgment of many years, I can not now see why he should have failed of being the conqueror of Duquesne had he acted with more military prudence, even if the enemy outnumbered us.

Major Lewis was ordered to take half the force and descend to the open space before the fort and attack all Indians lying out and then pretend to retreat to the hill where four hundred men would be posted along the side facing the fort ready to receive the enemy. The Cherokee and I went with Lewis. The night was so black and the woods were so dense the men were hopelessly scattered and confused before we could reach the plain. The Cherokee went in one direction to find stragglers, I went in another. But the entire force was straggling. It was with the utmost difficulty that Lewis got them together and led them back to Grant.

When our commander learned the men had lost their way he flew into a rage. He could not realize their difficulty in keeping together when they were forbidden to exchange signals for fear of prematurely arousing the fort. They had been ordered to take the outlying Indians by surprize and do as much damage as possible. It being impossible to see two feet in the thick cover there was no keeping to a straight course.

Major Lewis did all that mortal could. He had worked under the blanket of night, and even when we went back to report failure to Grant a thick fog was covering the lowlands and the early morning light afforded us no clues as to where the fort was, beyond our knowledge of the general direction.

But Grant was vastly displeased, and instead of sending Lewis forward a second time he ordered Captain MacDonald to take fifty Highlanders and draw the enemy from the fort.

Once more Bloody-Mouth and I went down the slope. It was rapidly growing lighter and the fog was thinning. I had no thought that this venture was in the least hazardous. We would strike swiftly and fall back. Woe to the enemy who pursued us.

We drew close to the stockade but found no Indians sleeping outside. Nor did our prowling about alarm any of the sentinels. Failing to fall on the savages, Captain MacDonald proceeded according to his orders and set fire to a large barn, or traders' warehouse. With the first burst of flame we could hear the sentries shouting:

"*Aux armes! Aux armes!*"

We commenced falling back, but not too rapidly. I doubted whether the enemy would leave the fort. The light was now good and the fifty of us were hoping they would fetch us a fight.

And then a red horde was pouring from the fort. My first glimpse of them satisfied me they had been aroused from sound sleep, as many were entirely naked, while others wore only their shirts. They came on screaming like madmen. They were eager to find some fighting and we had our wish. As we fell back the Cherokee called out to me:

"It is true, what I said. Joncaire and his far Indians have come to the fort!"

This was the sad fact; and to Chabert-Joncaire's presence with his savage followers was due that bloody day for the Colonies. The savages rushed us so strongly and in such large numbers that our leisurely withdrawal became a pell-mell retreat. Yet we were confident all would be well once we reached the foot of the slope and our waiting friends.

The Indians discharged their guns and volleyed us with arrows as they advanced. They were clawing at the rear and running along our flanks. The Highlanders, at first marching with military precision, would halt and deliver a volley and before they could reload some of the more impetuous of the Indians would break through and kill. The Highlanders commenced dropping from line as bullet or arrow found a mark in the too crowded ranks. Our numbers were decreasing while the enemy constantly received reenforcements.

O for the Virginians who could not see in the black night, but who could have fought so sweetly against the naked, painted, dancing mob now abreast of the head of our small force!

Our force halted, every man facing outward, and fired a heavy volley. The Indians were staggered for a moment and fell back from the rear and flanks. Then rose the despairing cry—

"They're ahead of us!"

The Cherokee bounded out of the smoke and grabbed me by the arm. He yelled:

"They've surrounded us! Come! We must break through to the hill!" And he dragged me in that direction.

As the fog rolled away and we perceived their numbers more exactly, I, at least, was recalling Braddock's fate only a few miles away.

Bloody-Mouth sounded his war-whoop and led a charge to break the line between us and the hill. MacDonald realized his terrible plight and called on his men to charge. He led most gallantly, running a few feet behind the Cherokee and me. Then he was killed. The impetus of this effort, however, carried the survivors to the foot of the hill where two columns were posted to support us.

But after we had started out to stir up that hornets' nest Major Grant had divided and separated his forces in such a fashion as to prevent the different divisions from supporting each other. Braddock had erred in keeping his army penned up in a narrow road. We were being cut off by units. Major Lewis had been sent, with some two hundred men, back to within half mile of the baggage guard. Grant had assumed the savages would make for the baggage, and he planned for Lewis to ambush them with deadly effect. A hundred provincials had been stationed toward the Allegheny, too far to the right to be of any service. Captain MacKenzie, with a detachment of Highlanders, was posted on the left, toward the Monongahela. All the Highlanders were new to this part of the country and unused to bush-fighting. Grant remained on the hill with but a hundred of his Highlanders and a company of Maryland men. Even when we were just breaking clear of the red circle of death he believed his position satisfactory; and to assure the scattered detachments there was nothing to fear he had the drums sound the reveille. It was the last morning roll of the drums many men were to hear, and fortunate were those who died with the drums dinning in their ears instead of living to be captured!

Now the Frenchmen came up, driving MacKenzie and his thinned-out force before them and upon us who were reaching cover. Grant was above us, with the timber hiding our plight from him and at the same time blinding him to his own danger.

We fought at hand-grips, from behind trees, in every hideous fashion, there on the slope for more than half an hour. The Highlanders, intrepid when once trained to red warfare, or when they can see what they are fighting, began breaking from cover and were promptly shot down or tomahawked. You could hear men trying to cough their lungs clear of the thick smoke or groaning away the last moments of life. The savages were everywhere; underfoot, behind trees, in the midst of a half-blinded, groping group, and always howling and slaying.

As a matter of history Joncaire had brought a strong force to Duquesne as early as July, but had been dispatched at once by Ligneris to the Ohio towns to persuade the Indians there to stand fast for France. He had lost out on that mission and had returned to the Fork the night before. Instead of an easy victory and fame for capturing Duquesne, we found ourselves confronting certain annihilation. Grant's only hope now was to fall back to Lewis' troops near the baggage-guard.

We were ordered to retreat over the path we had taken in gaining the hill. Through the smoke I glimpsed our leader's haggard face, and if brave men found hell in dying there that September morning I knew of one who found hell in living. We fell back, always fighting to keep the enemy from cutting us off. And always their naked figures glided along the flanks or raced to the front.

Frenchmen began calling on Grant to surrender, and it became plain that orders had been given to take him alive. He was constantly exposing himself, but no bullet nor arrow found him. Shouts of "Forbus," as the French often called General Forbes, indicated some of the French believed they had bagged our commander-in-chief.

Our Highlanders now were a crazed mob. Grant continually cried out for them to keep their heads, to be cool and fight. He continually shouted how he would turn the tide once he came within supporting distance of Lewis.

Then came the terrible discovery that shattered all hope—Lewis was not waiting to reenforce us. This was tragedy, simple and ghastly.

As we afterward learned Major Lewis had rushed his men forward in a straight line when the heavy firing persisted. He hastened to rescue us without being summoned. And in taking the shortest route he passed us in the forest, with neither force suspecting the proximity of the other. He plunged until he ran into the enemy. They were ahead of him and on rising ground, and they were on his flank. Not knowing where Grant was and having need of all his energy to extricate his force, he fought clear of the trap and turned about to find Grant.

The French and Indians were now justly convinced that they were duplicating the Braddock tragedy. Wild with exultation they poured upon us as we fought and retreated toward the baggage-guard. Even when half blinded by smoke and shifting our gaze to guard against fresh perils we could not escape seeing horrible sights every few feet of our retreat.

The Cherokee, always keeping by my side, ever ready to stand with his back to mine when we encountered an unusually tight spot, suddenly screamed with unusual intensity and left me to leap among the trees on our left. When he rejoined me he was covered with blood, and even in that moment of supreme despair I found time to believe he was done for and to regret that we could not have gone together. But it was the blood of an enemy that smeared him. He held before my eyes a human head. He swung it by the scalp lock and shouted in the Mohawk dialect—

"Here is an English gift for French dogs!"

And with that defiance he swung the head and hurled it into a group of Frenchmen and savages breaking into the path. The head hit a Frenchman and sent him staggering. I had recognized it at the first glance despite its paint. A round, brown face.

I found myself screaming:

"Good ——! You've killed Phindry!"

Then I was clubbing my gun and beating them off. The Cherokee had lost his gun and was fighting with knife and ax, doing deadly execution. He had been slashed across the back and wounded in the leg by an arrow. Now I had only the barrel of my gun left and my arms ached. Along each side streamed the savages. Those in the rear were falling rapidly. Had we had a quarter of a mile farther to go all could have been killed or taken prisoners.

But we fought our way to where Captain Bullitt was guarding the baggage. Grant was to be pitied for his great misery as he pleaded and begged his men to make a stand and at least get themselves killed decently. But they could not rally. They were actuated but by one desire—flight. Now the French officers were up with us and snapping out orders to their soldiers. They came up with a rush and a part of our men were driven toward the Allegheny where many were shot or drowned.

How sweetly amid so much adversity was the crackling volley of Bullitt's fifty guns! With the coolness of men ignorant of what fear meant the little baggage-guard came into action. The Cherokee and I realized the fate of those who ran for the river and we stuck fast with Bullitt. We got behind his thin line just as he engaged the entire French force—fifty men against a forest full of men. I was half-suffocated with smoke and kneeled to cough my lungs clear. My hands rested on a gun and I seized it and desperately tried to load it, and spilled the charge of powder as a hand clawed my fringed sleeve. I glanced down and beheld a man rapidly bleeding to death.

"Came here to get killed," he choked.

I did not understand him and would have climbed to my feet had not the clawing hand detained me long enough for me to hear him cry:

"Petny. Don't you know me?"

Then I recognized the ensign. His face was covered by a short, soft brown beard. He had been done to death by both bullets and arrows. Two shafts were broken off in his breast and thigh, and as he had stripped to the waist I could see the blue-black holes made by bullets.

"Hope I die before they get me!" he added faintly.

I had done it for Fincer. I would do it for him, but in a more direct way.

"They shall not get you alive!" I cried. "Fincer told me everything. I must get into the fighting."

He still gripped my sleeve.

"Been making roads. Elizabeth married. Forgot me. Forgot you. I did—wrong. Awful wrong. I—"

His time for explaining was done. The invisible hand tapped his shoulder and called him away from the world of temptation. He had taken French gold and had been false to his trust. He was all that honest men should abhor. Yet he was young. He had paid for gold with blood. Perhaps that was his atonement.

Now the French were surrounding us. Some persisted in yelling:

"Forbus! Good quarter!"

Captain Bullitt had lost two-thirds of his small force in an exceeding short space of time. Until he had lost them he did not begin to retreat. The French kept shouting for all of us to surrender. Although they could have killed Grant a dozen times since overtaking him at the baggage he was unharmed. He fought desperately, as if striving to get himself killed.

Captain Bullitt gave orders for a retreat, and with his few men commenced falling back to the Allegheny. The Cherokee and I went with him part way, when my friend grabbed my arm and yanked me to one side and into a hollow and began dragging me away from the fighting. I struggled to throw off his grip but was too weak.

He pressed his lips close to my ear and whispered:

"Too many die there. We will get away."

By this time, although we did not know it, Major Grant was a prisoner. Lewis returned with his men and attempted to save him and was also made a captive. With more than two hundred and seventy of our force captured or killed, the survivors made their way back to the Loyalhannon. The effect of our defeat on the Ohio Indians was bad for the Colonies. Although they did not go over to the French, Pennsylvania was under a great disadvantage at the Easton conference. The Colony was forced to promise more than she could perform. They pledged on pipes that all the land west of the Alleghenies should remain the red man's hunting-grounds, although one land company alone held claim to three million acres.

Of those who were captured in the fight Ligneris gave five to the savages to burn, while many others were tomahawked on the parade ground. Those who did not die at Duquesne would never have reached Canada alive had not Chabert-Joncaire accompanied them to protect them from his own savages.

When we reached Loyalhannon and it was known we had been bloodily handled, every effort was made to bring up reenforcements. Once more I acted express and traveled east.

The Cherokee went with me although he was needed as scout at Loyalhannon. But he insisted that some officer would lead him into a bush-fight and get him killed, so he went with me.

We found Raystown alive with expectancy of an immediate forward movement of the whole army, due to the arrival of General Forbes. My first glimpse of the general was when he was being carried in a horse-litter to inspect the beginning of the new road. As his wasted, pale face showed above the edge of the litter Bloody-Mouth whispered—

"A dead man leads the army."

The general's disorder was commonly spoken of as a "stomach trouble." Some said it was epilepsy. Whatever his ailment was it was persistent and torturing. Only an iron will could hold a well man to the task Forbes was facing. His presence in Raystown cheered the drooping spirits of the rank and file. On the march from Carlisle the pipers had drawn Eastern Indians after them, both men and women, as there was something in the wild music of the pipes which appealed strongly to the red man.

Our camp was a very busy place. Wagons were coming up to complete the trains. New levies were receiving their final training. Haste was being made in every department to get under way before autumn closed the road. Into this scene of activity the news of Grant's defeat and capture came as a terrible, unexpected blow. Men stared at each other wildly. New recruits scanned the woods fearfully, as if expecting painted men to leap out and butcher them.

General Forbes was quick to remedy this fear, and he spoke to his favorite piper, Donald MacKelvie. Thereafter the camp heard only lively and martial music. Nor can fear long abide where "Rosg Ghuil," or "The War Song of Gaul," is assailing the ears and strengthening the spirit. The pipers marched and played, the pipe-majors keeping them at the work of washing our souls clean of all dread. The stirring strains of "Peace or War," and "The Bonnie House of Airly" still ring in my ears when I am alone on an autumnal day and think back to those last hours in Raystown. Such sad tunes as "Farewell to Glen Shalloch" were omitted, as the pathos was unnerving to men who had just lost relatives and countrymen. Such invigorating quicksteps as "Caber Feidh" were the most popular.

Each morning Donald MacKelvie went to shave the general, who wore the long mustaches he had kept for twenty years, or since the battle of Lauffeld when he was campaigning under Marshal Ligonier.

There came a great disappointment when the army moved in earnest and it was learned the general must remain behind. Seized most viciously by his malady, he was held at Raystown for six weeks. Case went with the army, a soldier now instead of a road-builder. Bloody-Mouth and I were held at Raystown and missed the fighting at Loyalhannon when the French boldly attacked Bouquet. Although repulsed, the enemy did much damage by killing horses and cattle, which news threw Sir John into a fine sweat of profanity.

Moving by fragments, the army made the best possible speed to Loyalhannon, but by the middle of October Bouquet wrote so discouragingly of the road that our general declared the description pierced his soul. He sent orders for scouts to reconnoiter the Braddock road at the nearest point. In that drear month of chilling and heavy rains our general feared failure. He was ready to enter the Braddock road, especially if it could be done without crossing Laurel Mountain, and provided the road should be found suitable. At least he wished to prove it was impossible; and all this, as he phrased it, "to stop foolish mouths" should the campaign fail and he should be held responsible. During the third week in October we had four days of rain. It fell continuously. Colonel Washington's prophecy was being fulfilled.

Early in November our general was carried over the mountains to Loyalhannon, making the whole trip in his litter. More than once the Cherokee, still holding back with the pipes, because of his fondness for them, declared we were being led by a dead man. At last we were at the stockade on the Loyalhannon where six thousand men were assembled. Now my work was more to my liking and, with Old Gormet and Bloody-Mouth, I scouted much and repeatedly reported no signs of the enemy. I saw John Fairden occasionally but when I halted and attempted to talk with him he remained silent, his eyes staring at something I could not see.

The road the general had traversed was ruined by mountain streams. The lowlands we found to be churned to a pudding. Cannon and wagons were buried to the hub, or hopelessly mired. The poor horses were continually giving out. These silent sufferers were compelled to haul their own feed as well as all the army supplies. Sir John was constantly being urged to fill the depots at Raystown and Loyalhannon, but the loads were exhausted as fast as the trains could get through.

Young Ensign Chew came in from a far scout and reported that Ligneris' force was much weakened by the departure of troops he could not feed. The ensign had spied on the fort from the hill where Grant had halted the night before his capture. He also reported that many of the Indians were returning to their winter homes. Joncaire had departed with his wild fighters. Duquesne would be easy to take—if we could manage to get that far. To turn back was as difficult as to go ahead. Indeed, retreat was almost impossible. The fall weather was now threatening to destroy us as effectually as Beujeu and his rabble had destroyed Braddock.

I had been in camp several days before I saw Case. He had been detailed to repair a stretch of road back to the ridge and was in bad humor. Our talk was brief.

"I'd quit in a minute if it wasn't for saving my hunting-grounds," he told me.

"Nonsense, man. What's a little hardship when you go to war?"

"It isn't war when you have a gun and no chance to shoot it, when you make roads the first rain will wash out."

"At least you are an honest man now."

"I was an honest man before until some fool questioned the bills I took so much pains to make and put into circulation," he countered.

The next day it was common talk that our officers had given up all hope of continuing the campaign. Braddock had marched within seven miles of the fort and was massacred. We had advanced to within fifty miles of the place, and the elements had defeated us. It then became known that after carefully examining into the whole situation a council of officers, presided over by Forbes, had decided it was impossible to achieve anything more that season. This left the hazardous risk of wintering a large portion of the army where it would be most doubtful whether man or beast could be supplied with food. Colonel

Washington's prophecy was fulfilled when this decision was reached.

It would have been fulfilled for all time if not for the chance capture of three of the enemy. What ordinarily would have been a trifling matter now became a hinge on which history was to swing. The prisoners frankly described the weakness of Duquesne.

Forbes decided it was die or do. Never had he merited the name of "Head of Iron" better than now. He gave rapid orders and we knew the business was forward again. On the eighteenth of November he was assisted into his litter and with twenty-five hundred men started for Duquesne.

Washington and Armstrong went ahead to cut the way, the former having requested to be given that portion of the task. The general was carried at the heels of a stout vanguard. We moved in three parallel columns. In the center marched the stocky Highlanders, playing their pipes. On the right and left moved the Royal Americans and the Provincials, Bouquet's and Washington's regiments, respectively. At the head of each column a drummer tapped his drum as a guide to the long thin line. The men carried only knapsacks and blankets.

We were swallowed up by the forest. Frost-bitten leaves were our carpet. A wailing wind in the bare branches sounded like ghosts mourning. The gray November sky was very close to the forest crown. Never was Nature in a more dispiriting mood.

ON THE evening of the sixth day we camped among the hills on Turkey Creek and near to Braddock's field. We scouts reported smoke in the direction of the fort. At midnight many in the camp were aroused by a dull booming noise. Some believed the French were firing cannon to celebrate the arrival of reenforcements from the Niagara. The more sanguine said the magazine had blown up. Some of the officers urged the general to hold back the army until a small detachment had learned the true situation. But our general had had enough of reconnoitering parties and vowed he would sleep "in Duquesne or hell tonight."

We untangled the army from the hills and made slow work of it. It was late afternoon when we marched down the trail over which brave Beujeu had led his half-hearted mixed force to smash the head of an army.

Never did the November wind moan more forlornly than when we entered the plain at dusk and beheld the squat, baleful bulk of Duquesne. It looked strange to me—too low and insignificant. Never did the background of hills look more wintry and drear. For three miles we were constantly sighting the bodies of those killed when Grant's ambition cost nearly three hundred men. But the climax of the Highlanders' rage was reached when they beheld the heads of their companions mounted on poles and derisively draped with kilts.

What had been a fort was a mass of ruins. The huts had been torn down to aid the flames. The barracks and warehouses were piles of smoking débris. The fortifications had been mined in places. Ligneris and his garrison were gone. The place was ours without a blow being struck.

As we came up to the place the Highlanders surged forward with a mighty lust to find something to kill. They found only a barrel of new scalping-knives.

Two days after entering the ruins General Forbes wrote a report to Sir William Pitt, and headed it, "Pittsborough." And here was another momentous transition. Not only were the French gone, but "Duquesne" was gone, and a city with an English name was to grow up in its place.

With his work finished, once he had written his report to Pitt, the indomitable general took to his litter and by sheer will-power kept alive until he could be carried back to Philadelphia where he might die in a civilized bed.

That return of the army stands out in my memory as being more terrible than its advance. Low-hanging clouds sifted snow through the forest tops. The hardwood growths were wailing, creaking, skeletal shapes. The road was impossible. Each day was like the preceding—rain and snow, cold and hunger. Behind and ahead, when the eye could look any distance from the top of a ridge, was the bleak, lonely country. No longer did the pipers play sprightly tunes, but expressed their sorrow for their general's plight with "McIntosh's Lament." None of us could look ahead one short year and see Quebec fallen and New France gone from the New World.

I HAD lost track of Case from the time we entered the ruins of Duquesne, and I never saw him again. Bloody-Mouth and Old Gormet were with me on the return trip. The Cherokee bid me good-by outside of Carlisle. He was free to return to his people, having made his peace through the delegation that visited us at Raystown. Old Gormet returned to the Conococheague.

I felt very lonely as I entered Carlisle late in a gloomy afternoon. I had no desire to go to Philadelphia. There was no work for me beyond the mountains. During the white months military operations in the North would be at a standstill. I had no one waiting for me anywhere.

As I walked aimlessly through the town, with a keen wind pushing at my back, I was aroused from my moody thoughts by a woman's voice crying:

"Lord of mercy! He's come back! Here he is, Ann!"

I did not see the speaker but I knew her voice. I jerked about and stood my ground in the jostling throng. Before I knew it Ann Beverly was standing almost under my arm. And she was saying:

"You come inside, Mr. Nolton. You come in and eat and rest and get warm. Mother and me have taken turns watching for you ever since the first men straggled into town."

All I could think of to say as I stared down into the pink, flushed face was;

"So you're all well? And your aunt?"

"Aunt Mercy died in her sleep the night we got word Duquesne was taken."

I shouldered a way to the little house, for the street was no place to talk, with more soldiers and wagons coming up every minute. Now she had lost her hurry to get me under cover and came to a halt.

"Mr. Case was here two days ago," she began. "He said to tell you, if I saw you, that he'd got his property out of a hollow tree and soon would have money and fine clothes."

"The scamp! He'll be up to his old tricks again!"

She was silent for a moment, then added:

"He told me something else. He told me everything."

"He told you that back in the cave," I reminded. "I liked him mighty well. And now he'll be passing his worthless paper again!"

"I don't mean that. Turn around and see those soldiers. Do not look at me. He told me what he told you."

"He was free to confess his thoughts. There's no man I would trust more quickly and completely."

"I do not mean that. Something you said you could not believe. A woman must not say such things."

I faced her quickly. Her head was bowed and she put my hand aside as I would have put it under her chin so I might look down into her face.

"Aye. He told me what I dared not believe!" I cried. "I was homesick and miserable. Now I am asleep and dreaming—"

"Not out here!" and she ran to the door. "Come in. Come in and forget all the misery. Come in and tell my mother. But she must never know I was unmaidenly!"

THE END

Misadventure

By

F. ST. MARS

SOAR! Soar! Soar! Soar!

First a flap, and then a soar—effortless, masterful, superb, upborne upon immense wings nine feet across, suspended—nay, floating sublime in the infinite, athwart the brazen arc of heaven.

So the big griffon vulture passed upon her lawful occasions, gliding and wheeling now this way, now that, in vast circles; merely a speck in the void, across the miles, but always, as it were, though apparently aimless, really revolving in an invisible orbit round an imaginary center—always, that is, within the league-wide limit of her prescribed "beat." And on her beam, a speck; and on her starboard, a speck; and ahead, astern, a speck; and abeam, starboard, ahead, astern of them, specks; and so on, endlessly, across the miles, across the districts, across perhaps a continent—vultures, watching, ever watching; hungry vultures.

At length she ceased weaving her endless chain of circles, lifted a wing-flange, "warped" her tail, and began to work back on the other tack. Suddenly she banked and came about.

Beneath her was a table covered with a biscuit-colored, green-yellow embroidered table-cloth, but it was a burnt grassy plain really. And upon the plain, a little scattered group of ants, moving slowly about, which, interpreted, was a herd of antelope—hartbeest antelope, officially—feeding. Not that she saw the antelope—they being painted to mimic their surroundings—so much as their shadows, which they could not color or hide.

Suddenly from a patch of embroidery—herbage, if you like—leapt a—a dot. Hop! Hop! Hop! Hop! and it was upon one of the antelopes, the last one, for although they had bunched quickly as a gambler rakes in winnings, and got going—as the little pearl of dust attested—one of them had not got going quickly enough.

And the griffon vulture lifted another wing-flange, banked again—rather steeply this time—and began to corkscrew down. Every speck within sight, though most of them could not sight the antelopes and dot, saw her, or saw those that saw her, and followed suit, corkscrewing down wonderfully out of nowhere, with her as the vortex of their swirl.

As the griffon vulture came down, or rather as the earth rushed up to her, as it seemed, the dot's shadows grew and grew, to the size of mice, to the dimensions of rats, to the form of dogs, to—a lion engaged in the last act of killing a hartbeest antelope who was, naturally, protesting vigorously.

With a swish and a waft of vast pinions backing air, the vulture came to anchor upon a gaunt skeleton that we call a tree, by courtesy, hard by. Another swish and *hr-r-r* of long stiff quills, and another vulture joined her. Others, obliquely diving, followed suit, with noises like the swishing of silk skirts, and the harsh rattling of folded plumes. Other vultures, and yet others, took up strategical positions beside the first, till the tree was full of its strange new, slovenly, croaking, out-at-heels fruit. My! but they were an ungodly looking crew.

MINUTES passed while the lion neatly disemboweled his kill with the skill of a professional, while the air became full of vultures all tickled to death over the proceedings. Then he dragged himself in among the grass under the gaunt tree, while the vultures, craning their bald heads and naked necks over their white feather "boas," hurled croaks at him like hail.

For a time after that he fed, to the accompaniment of wing swishes and hoarse remarks of vultures sailing about him, and then at last he went to drink. He had to. The heat was enough to boil your blood.

The "pan," or pool—green slime and crocodiles and insects mostly—was only a few yards away, and he was gone but a few seconds; yet in that time, the big female vulture, driven by a desire keener even than the seemingly chronic starvation hunger of the rest of the gang, made a clumsy, hoppy, slidy rush for the carcass, and—got there. I say she got there and—well, there the matter, so far as that one individual bird was concerned, ended. She did not get any farther. She did not get away again.

There broke out instantly from earth and trees and sky, a coughing grunt, such as a geyser might make when about to blow up, and three terrific thumps followed. The last thump landed the lion clean under the rising vulture and, with one awful sweep of bared claws, he fetched her down in a sprawly feathery heap. And she never got up again. Things don't, as a rule, after stopping that sweep. It's as sure as the electric chair.

MILES away, in an untidy scraggly nest on an untidy scraggy rock, a horrible object which was a young griffon vulture waited famishing for a mother who never came. Such is life—or rather death.

The Red Triangle

TO THE casual eye Henry Clay Boggs was a glaring example of what malnutrition will do to a man. He was so bony that one almost expected him to rattle like a skeleton when he walked. He was above medium height, thin, bony of face, and his deep-set gray eyes looked out upon the world past a nose which had been forcibly misplaced several times. One eyebrow was slightly higher than the other, as if reaching up to touch the tip of a lock of sandy hair straggling down over a damp forehead.

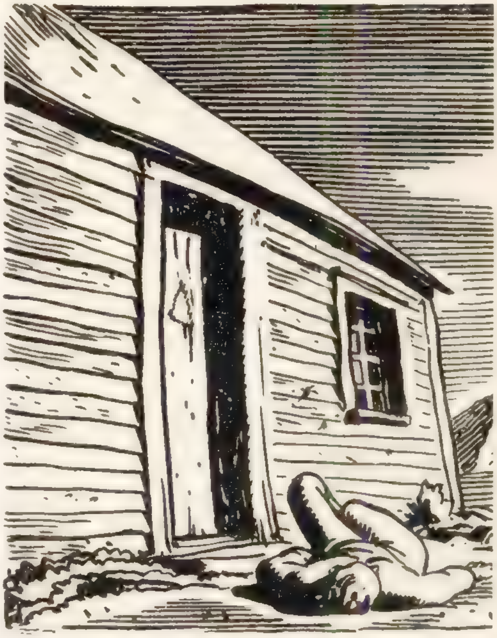
On Henry's shirt-bosom hung the insignia of his office—deputy sheriff of Cherokee. His thin waist sagged sidewise from the weight of the holstered gun and cartridge-belt as he leaned one elbow on the Paragon Saloon bar and considered the bartender, who was polishing a glass.

The Paragon was the largest saloon and gambling-house in the town of Cherokee in the days long before the Eighteenth Amendment was created. The bar and fixtures were of a good quality and the Paragon prided itself on the fact that it was in business to serve the public, whether the demand be wine, women or song.

Directly behind Henry Clay Boggs, and across the room, was a stud-poker table, every chair filled. Farther up the room several men stood at a whirring roulette-wheel. But most of the games were closed that early in the day.

"Lemme take that there git-arr?" requested Henry, pointing to a guitar which was standing in the angle of the back bar. The bartender stopped polishing his glass and considered Henry. The deputy of Cherokee was just a trifle drunk.

"That guitar," said the bartender, "ain't got but two strings on her, Henry."



"Well," drawled Henry, "how in —— many strings do yuh reckon I need to play on jist this once, Oscar? Lemme look at her, will yuh? I feel kinda moody."

Oscar examined his hair in the glass, discovered that one hair was misplaced and proceeded to remedy that before handing the two-string instrument to Henry.

"She ain't in tune," he said. Henry struck the strings softly.

"She ain't," he agreed, "but who cares? ——, there's lotta worse things than not bein' in tune." Henry strummed thoughtfully. "I made up a song," he said. "I didn't make up the tune, but I made up the words."

"Yeah?" The bartender didn't seem interested.

" 'S a good song," said Henry. "I reckon I'll sing it for yuh."

Henry's voice was as much in tune as

A Complete Novelette

By W. C. TUTTLE

the guitar, but he sang from his soul, his nose pointed toward the ceiling:

> "I've pounded a bronc from Mexico
> To Canada's mountains ta-a-a-all.
> I've roamed her wide,
> I've roamed her free,
> But there's jist one place I ever did see-e-e,
> Where there ain't no law a-a-at a-a-all.
>
> "O-o-o-oh, Cherokee-e-e, I'd love yuh
> A long ways away from me-e-e-e.
> Yo're a —— of a place for a white man,
> As any one plainly can see-e-e-e.
> The gun-fights are brother-to-brother,
> The moon hides her face there at ni-i-i-ight.
> They're so tough their skins hurt,
> Wash their ears in the dir-r-rt,
> And often fly anvils for ki-i-i-ites."

Henry quavered the last word, twanged the two strings softly and sighed. Henry was nothing if not sincere. He knew Cherokee as well as any man who lived there. And every man in the Paragon had heard the song. There was no applause. A man was cashing in his chips at the stud game, and now he came toward the bar—Jim Tuck, known as "Friar."

Friar Tuck was a slender, wiry cowboy, about thirty years of age—the last of the fighting Tucks of Cherokee. His hair was straight and black, hinting at a remote strain of Indian blood, as did his thin, dark face, slightly hooked nose and brown eyes which were habitually half closed.

He halted at the bar and looked at Henry Clay Boggs, a sarcastic smile on his thin lips.

"If yuh don't like the country, why in —— don't yuh leave it?" he asked. "Nobody'd miss yuh."

There had never been any friendship between Friar Tuck and Henry Clay Boggs. It appeared that Henry did not pay any attention to what Friar Tuck said. He sighed again and allowed the guitar to sag down until he only held it in one hand, grasping the neck of it almost at the keys.

"I said that nobody'd miss yuh," repeated Friar Tuck.

"Didn't yuh like my song?" asked Henry softly.

"Oh, was yuh singin'?" Friar Tuck laughed scornfully and turned to the bartender. It is possible that Friar was going to get an opinion from the bartender, but just at that moment Henry suddenly came to life, grasped the guitar in both hands and smashed it down over Friar Tuck's head with such force that Friar Tuck's black hair, one ear and his face as far down as the end of his nose came up through the top of the guitar.

It was a terrific crash. Friar Tuck almost went to his knees, and a moment later his two arms were flailing around, as he tried to get himself loose. The splintering wood had cut his nose and forehead—this much was evident.

The games broke up for a few minutes.

Friar Tuck was unable to get the thing off his head unassisted, and he was a little chary of assistance because of the sharp edges of the splintered wood.

Henry Clay Boggs was not offering any assistance. He had moved farther down the bar, his right thumb hooked over the top of his sagging cartridge-belt, just above the butt of his six-shooter. Henry knew Friar Tuck, and was just a little surprized that Friar had not made any attempt to take a shot at him. But Henry did not realize that Friar was just a little too miserable to think of shooting anybody.

"I'll git a saw," suggested one of the poker players. "Don't yank it, Friar."

"Split it with an ax," said another.

"Don't bust it any worse than it already is," pleaded the bartender. "That thing cost me fifteen dollars. Can'tcha pry yore face out of it, Friar?"

"What's goin' on here?"

It was "Bunch" Sherr, the sheriff, with the voice of a bull, who had come in unobserved. Bunch was a huge figure of a man, carrying rather too much weight around the waistline. His hair was iron-gray, straggling down from beneath his old black sombrero. His head was blocky, as were his harsh features, like an unfinished piece of scuplture out of which twinkled a pair of very blue eyes. Bunch had been elected sheriff of Cherokee without any opposition. He was the only man in the whole Cherokee range that wanted to be sheriff, and the office paid two hundred dollars a month, while even a ranch foreman only received sixty per month.

Just now he hunched his shoulders and looked at Friar Tuck, who was struggling to get his head back through the broken guitar.

"Hennery busted him over the head with it," exclaimed the bartender.

"Go out, Henry," ordered the sheriff—and Henry went out. He was perfectly willing to get away while the getting away was good.

Risking more scratches, Friar Tuck managed to get his head loose and flung the ruined instrument against the bar. His face was badly scratched, but beyond that he was all right. But his feelings were hurt more than his face. He swore by all the gods that ever operated in Cherokee that he would separate and classify every internal organ belonging to Henry Clay Boggs.

The sheriff's blue eyes twinkled, although his mouth was set in grim lines, as he waited for Friar Tuck to run out of profanity. And the sheriff knew Tuck would surely attempt to follow out his proclamation. But the sheriff also knew that Henry Clay Boggs was eminently capable of taking care of himself, so he had no fear for Henry.

"What brought all this on?" he asked, when Friar Tuck stopped to catch his breath.

"Friar didn't like Henry's song," said the bartender.

"He'll sing when I get hold of him," promised Friar.

"This here song," queried the sheriff," "it wasn't about Friar, was it, Oscar?"

"Naw, sir, it wasn't. It was about Cherokee. Friar told him to leave the country if he didn't like it. The song was somethin' about there not bein' no law here and the moon hidin' its face at night and everybody bein' kinda tough."

"Uh-huh," nodded the sheriff. He turned to Friar. "It don't seem like you had any cause to start trouble with Hennery."

"Thasso?" Friar wiped some blood off his nose, his half-closed eyes considering the sheriff belligerently. Then he started to grin. "Mebbe it wasn't so much," he admitted. "But that —— fool got on my nerves. He always gits on my nerves, Bunch."

"On mine, too," simply.

"—— him, he howls like a pup!" snorted Friar. "Who in —— ever told him he could sing?"

"I dunno," the sheriff shook his head

sadly. "It must 'a' made a big impression on him, 'cause I've shore told him plenty of times that he can't. And he's so sad when he sings. My, I never knowed a man that sadded up so badly when he sung. He prob'ly didn't hit yuh because he was mad at yuh, Friar—it was 'cause he was so awful sad."

"Yeah, I'll betcha," nodded Friar. "Jussasame, next time I'm around when he starts to sing, I'm goin' to kill him."

Friar accepted a drink from the bartender, went out to a hitch-rack, mounted his sorrel horse and rode away. At least trouble was averted for the day. The sheriff found that Friar had lost fifty dollars in the stud game, which was sufficient cause for his nerves to be on edge.

NOW rather a queer situation existed in the Cherokee range. About a year previous to this day when Henry Clay Boggs exasperated Friar Tuck with his song, Barney Ellis, cousin and boon companion of Friar Tuck, had been tried for horse stealing. He had been accused of stealing a horse from the Diamond F outfit. Barney was a wild-riding sort of person. He had taken a small herd of horses to Salina, where he sold them to a traveling horse buyer. One of these horses was branded with a Diamond F—and a Diamond F cowpuncher saw the horse.

Barney swore he didn't know anything about it, and the buyer swore he didn't. Barney paid the Diamond F the price he got for the horse, and the case was dismissed. All would have been well, except that Barney got drunk that night and talked too much. In fact, he admitted that he had stolen the horse and that he would do the same thing again if he got a chance.

A horse-thief's existence, it must be said, is precarious, even if he is not known, and a confessed horse-thief stands about the same chance in a cattle country as the proverbial snowball has in the next hotter place than Death Valley.

Friar Tuck, celebrating Barney's release, got drunk with him, and they rode together out to Barney's place that night. Friar was hardly able to tell what happened that night. He remembered that some one knocked on the door, and that Barney got up and went out, carrying a gun in his hand.

Friar swore that two shots were fired, and that he got up and went to the front door, which was closed. From the window he saw three men ride away in the moonlight. Then he opened the door and found Barney stretched out on the steps, stone dead. The shock sobered Friar. He went to Cherokee for the sheriff.

It was daylight when the sheriff and deputy rode out there with several other men from town and found Barney. His gun was still clutched in his stiff right hand, one cartridge fired. He had been shot at such close range that the powder had burned a spot on his shirt-bosom. There was blood on his shirt, too; and finger-marks, as if some one had tried to examine the wound and had smeared his fingers with blood.

Strangely enough, the front door was painted—painted a white shade which had faded to an ivory. It was the only part of the house which had been painted. The fact of the matter was, Barney had taken the old door from a demolished shack in Cherokee and had fitted it to his house.

And on this door, almost in the center of the middle panel, was a triangle drawn in blood. It was as if some one had wiped bloody fingers across the painted wood, unconsciously drawing a triangle.

"I jist wonder if that's a trade-mark, or did they make it without knowin' it?" the sheriff had questioned. But no one knew. And Barney Ellis went to his last resting-place, mourned only by Friar Tuck and his father, who owned the JFT outfit.

It was a blow to Friar. The elder Tuck, crippled with rheumatism and the effects of several bullets which he had collected in his earlier manhood, also went the way of all flesh a short time after the killing of

Barney Ellis, and Friar became owner of the JFT.

That is, he became the owner, in name. But he soon found that the elder Tuck had mortgaged the JFT for every cent the local bank would stand and was behind in the interest. There was no possible chance for Friar to raise the money, so he lost the JFT, built himself a shack on Totem Creek, managed to get enough money to start a little herd and eke out an existence.

But adversity had changed the disposition of Friar Tuck. From a wild-riding devil of a young man, he had changed to a calculating, hard-eyed cowboy. He and Barney Ellis had been bunkies; always together. Now Friar Tuck rode alone, lived alone. He raised a few horses, a few cows, gambling away what he did not need for food and clothing. He was proverbially unlucky at cards.

The Cherokee bank sold the JFT ranch to Art Dean, who retained the brand, while Friar Tuck registered his iron as the Mission Cross Anchor. Men said that Friar Tuck was always on the watch for the three men who had killed Barney Ellis.

And the sign of the red triangle did not end with those three marks on Barney Ellis' front door. Within three months after Barney's death John Wolf, a half-breed, was found beside an old corral on Pine Creek, shot through the head; and on the bosom of his light-colored shirt was scrawled the red triangle.

John Wolf had lived alone in a little shack near where Pine Creek emptied into Blue River, a sort of old hermit who trapped in the winter. As far as any one knew he had no enemies. He was unarmed and had been dead about two days when found.

There was no question that the red triangle had been purposely drawn, in this case. It did not take long for word of the mark to spread, and it caused considerable apprehension. Friar Tuck heard the news with a grim smile.

"Came back again, eh?" he growled. "They'll come back once too often."

The sheriff talked with Friar Tuck about what he had seen that night at Barney Ellis' shack, but Friar did not seem to know who the three men were. It was very puzzling to the sheriff. A reason could be assigned for the killing of Barney Ellis, because cattle-folks are likely to deal harshly with a confessed horse-thief; but old John Wolf had never been suspected of doing anything except minding his own business.

FOR the next month there were no more signs of the red triangle—and then it appeared again. Ike Wier, a wiry little leather-necked cowboy belonging to the JFT outfit, failed to show up at the ranch one night. The following afternoon he was found north of the JFT, sprawled on his back across the carcass of his dead horse. He had been shot three times.

His right leg had been broken between ankle and knee, presumably caused when his horse was killed. The ground showed that the horse had been killed while running at full speed, and there was no question that Ike Wier's body had been placed across the carcass of the animal. One of the shots had been fired at close range, as if the killer or killers wanted to be sure he was dead. And on Wier's bosom, and also on the saddle, was drawn in blood the sign of the red triangle.

He had been found by "Bud" Green and Eddie Clark, two of the Diamond F cowpunchers, who brought the news to town. The invisible three had struck again—and why? Bunch Sherr came back from the scene and announced that he was going to resign his office. He talked with Dean of the JFT, "Shorty" Pierce, the six-foot-six, gray-haired owner of the Paragon, and Marsh Conlan, president of the Cherokee bank. They advised him to stick with the job.

"No man will take it if you quit," declared Conlan, who was also on the board of county commissioners and felt responsible for the affairs of the county.

"But I can't do a thing," complained the sheriff. "Here's three murders inside of four months. Who's next? My God, this is a terrrible thing, Marsh! And what can yuh do?"

Marsh Conlan shook his head.

"It's a tough situation, Bunch. But your resignation won't help any. Do the best you can and we'll back you."

"They're grumblin'," said the sheriff. "I'm no detective, Marsh. I can't chase a shadder. And —— 'em, they make their mark."

"Folks will always grumble," said Frank Dean. He was a small, gray-haired man, grown old in the cattle business. He turned and looked toward the Paragon Saloon where several cowboys had just come out. Life had been kind to Frank Dean—with one exception. And that exception was one of those cowboys.

No one could say that Jack Dean was a chip off the old block. Twenty-five years of age, fairly good looking, owner of a small brand—the Bar D—married to a daughter of Marsh Conlan, Jack Dean had every reason to be a man among men. But his appetite for liquor and the lure of the poker table was fast making him a bum.

Just now he needed a hair-cut, shave, clean shirt. His blood-shot eyes peered from under the rakish tilt of his sombrero, and he slapped the palm of his right hand against the leg of his bat-wing chaps.

"We are the people and must be respected!" he yelled. "Take off yore hats to the he-buzzards of the hen-house. Yee-e-o-o-o-ow!"

Jack Dean's cowboy yell went echoing down the street. It was his usual battle-cry. His father turned away, shaking his head sadly. Pierce frowned. He hated to see Jack Dean drunk. But the Paragon had no legitimate excuse to refuse liquor to Jack. He was of age, and if he couldn't get it at the Paragon there were plenty of other places.

"Jack's a —— fool!" snorted the sheriff.

Marsh Conlan had nothing to say. Jack was his son-in-law, and the gray-haired banker knew what Molly thought of Jack's actions. Conlan turned and went back to the bank, while Frank Dean and Shorty Pierce went into the sheriff's office with Bunch Sherr.

Shortly after Marsh Conlan had entered the bank Jack Dean left the group at the Paragon and went to the bank. Jack was not staggering drunk, nor too drunk to know what he was doing. There were no customers in the bank. Marsh Conlan was at the cashier's cage talking to Ed Gage, the cashier.

"Hello, Jack," said Conlan pleasantly.

"Hyah," nodded Jack, a trifle owlishly. "Lemme have li'l speech with thee?"

"Why certainly. Come back to my office."

Marsh Conlan's private office was at the rear of the room. Jack followed him in and sat down beside the desk. Jack reeked of whisky. Slapping his hat on one knee, he leaned back in his chair.

"I want to put a mortgage on the Bar D," he said.

"A mortgage on the Bar D, eh? Why, Jack?"

"Is that the quest'n yuh usually ask, Marsh?"

Marsh Conlan looked speculatively at his daughter's husband.

"How much of a mortgage do you require, Jack?"

"O-o-oh, 'bout five thousand dollars."

"On what?"

"On what? Why, on the Bar D outfit, of course."

Marsh Conlan shook his head slowly.

"No, Jack. That would be a very bad investment for the bank. If you want to sell the outfit—"

"I don't want to sell. I want to borrow some money."

"What for, Jack?"

"What for? Well," thoughtfully, "suppose I want to buy more cattle?"

"Red, white and blue ones?"

"Red, white—pretty smart, eh?"

"Not so very smart. You've lost practically every cent you've made in the last year, and you want five thousand more to hand across to some dealer. No, Jack, I can't let you do it. No, that is final.

I'm willing to help you in any way I can, but not through the bank."

Jack Dean got to his feet, his lips shut tightly. Marsh Conlan also got up, resting one hand on the desk.

"And another thing, Jack," he said calmly. "I may as well tell you—if you don't change your ways right now, Molly is coming home to stay."

Jack Dean rubbed his nose with the back of his hand, his blood-shot eyes staring at the floor of the office. Finally he looked up at Conlan.

"Yuh mean—Molly's goin' to leave—me?"

"That is exactly what I mean."

"Well, for ——'s sake!" breathed Jack. "That's shore news to me. I—I never suspicioned anythin' like that."

"Well, it is true, so think it over, Jack."

"Uh-huh. That's somethin' to think 'bout, y'betcha."

He turned and walked out of the bank. Marsh Conlan watched him get his horse at the hitch-rack and ride out of town. Some of the boys at the Paragon called to him, but he did not heed.

SHORTY PIERCE went back to the Paragon from the sheriff's office. The stud game had ceased operating, for lack of customers, and the dealer, "Chuck" Liggett, called Pierce aside.

"Jack Dean got to plungin' again today," he said. "I didn't want to stand him off so strong, but you said—"

"Yeah—how much, Chuck?" asked Pierce impatiently.

"Well, he owes us seven hundred and fifty, Pierce."

Pierce scowled.

"He must have been plungin'."

" —— fool got drunk."

"All right, Chuck. But not any more. He's running a whisky bill, too, I reckon."

"Has been for quite a while. I dunno how much that is."

"It's too bad," sighed Pierce. "Today's business makes him over a thousand in the hole, just on gambling. Don't let him have any more, Chuck. I don't want his credit. Darn him, I don't even want his cash. His dad is one of the best there is, and it sure is breakin' the old man all up. So if Jack wants any more credit, send him to me, will yuh, Chuck?"

"Oh, sure. He never did have any luck, and he plays poker like a half-wit. It wouldn't be so bad if the house would win all that credit back, but he loses a lot of it to other players and we have to cash in their chips."

Pierce nodded.

"I know. Keep your eyes and ears open, Chuck. Everybody is upset over this red triangle proposition, and if yuh hear anything—keep it."

"Sure. Say, that's sure funny. They tell me that Ike Wier was laid across his horse after he was killed. And they put their mark on both horse and rider."

The gambler shuddered.

"Kinda makes a feller scare at his own shadow, Pierce."

"It will, if it keeps up, Chuck."

"It's sure a funny deal. What's the idea of the red triangle? What does anybody want to advertise murder for, I wonder?"

"God only knows," sighed Pierce. "Ike was a good boy, even if he was rather salty."

"It kinda makes yuh wonder," mused the gambler. "I'd hate to be the red triangle fellers, if Friar Tuck ever finds 'em. He ain't been the same person since Barney Ellis was killed. He's kinda snaky, if yuh know what I mean. When anybody mentions Barney, Friar's jaw kinda gets set and his eyes glitter like the eyes of a rattler. If I was the Red Triangle, I'd sure kill him the first chance I had."

"Would yuh?" Pierce smiled faintly. "Maybe they will—who knows?"

"IF IT was me, I'd call a meetin' of everybody in the gosh-derned range and kinda thrash things out."

"Goober" Gillis spat, crossed his long legs and leaned back against the JFT bunk-house. Goober was very long, without a curve to his anatomy. His features were bony, sallow of skin. He was born to look sad, it seemed.

"Tiny" Breen shifted his two hundred and forty pounds of anatomy, blew out the cigaret that was so short it was burning his walrus-like mustache and stared deliberately at Goober. "Jew" Mulligan, a broad-shouldered, stocky cowboy, the third member of the JFT outfit, fairly exploded:

"You would, eh? Goober 'd hold a meetin', Tiny. Do ye mind that now? A meetin', 'eh? And I suppose ye'd kindly ask the Rid Triangle to keep away. Why, ye poor relic of a vanishin' race! Hold a meetin'—ye would!"

Goober was one-eighth Sioux, but no one would guess it. Hence Mulligan's reference to the vanishing race.

"Well, what would you do, you kingless bog-trotter?" queried Goober.

Mulligan did not take offense.

"How about layin' for 'em?" suggested Tiny innocently.

"La-a-ay for 'em!" exploded Mulligan. "Where?"

"Don't mind him," said Goober. "He'd be sure to suggest *layin'*. Tiny is the greatest layer in the Cherokee country."

"One wants to hold a meetin' an' the other wants to lay for 'em," wailed Mulligan. "Such intelligence!"

"Oh, I ain't as smart as some folks, said Tiny, "but I'd give a lot to git my two hands on the jigger that killed Ike Wier."

"Ay, and so would I, Tiny. Poor old Ike. And why did they kill him? Why not one of us?"

Goober shuddered.

"Yuh don't need to send out no suggestions, Jew. ——, I'm gettin' scared of the dark. If this keeps up, you'll find old man Gillis' heavy-set offspring pullin' out of this country pretty —— fast."

"They plugged him good," muttered Mulligan. "In the back. Did ye notice the way Ike's lips was pulled back from his teeth? Belike he was goin' to bite somebody."

Goober unlimbered and got to his feet. "You tell it to Tiny," he said. "He can shudder off a few pounds and not miss it. Here comes Marsh Conlan."

"They tell me that Jack Dean is drinkin' too much these days," said Tiny, squinting toward the approaching horse and buggy. "I been a-hearin' that the stud game at the Paragon has kinda bent his bank-roll. Somebody better head that fool kid off before he bogs hisself."

"I came past there yesterday," said Mulligan. "Jack wasn't home. I talked with Mrs. Dean. On the way to town I met Jack. He was drunk as usual. But somethin' had gone wrong with the lad. I dunno what it was."

"It'll be snakes, I reckon," said Goober. "That Paragon whisky sure brings up crippled crawlers."

"It wasn't snakes," Mulligan shook his head. "The lad was drunk and serious."

Marsh Conlan drove up to the porch of the JFT, and Frank Dean came out to meet him. It was not often that the Cherokee banker came out to the JFT. He got out of the buggy and tied the horse to a corner of the porch.

Neither of the men said anything until they sat down together in the shade of the old porch.

"Well, Frank," said Conlan, "Molly came home this morning."

"You mean—she came home to stay, Marsh?"

"Yes, to stay."

"Well, I—I expected it, Marsh."

Marsh Conlan put a hand on Frank Dean's knee and looked him square in the eyes.

"I don't need to tell you I'm sorry, Frank. Jack tried to get me to take a mortgage on the Bar D for five thousand. I refused. He owes the Paragon Saloon a lot of money. In fact, I believe Jack is in debt up to his neck. And he's drinking a lot, Frank—too much for Molly to get along with him, so she came home this morning."

Frank Dean nodded slowly, his eyes misty.

"When Jack and Molly got married it made me happy, Marsh. It looked like a sure go. I've done everythin' I could to help make 'em happy. I gave Jack his start."

"You sure played square with Jack," nodded the banker.

"He's my son," said Dean simply.

They sat together silently. It seemed that there was nothing else to say. From the open front door they could hear old "Flatwheel" Culler, the cook, singing in a cracked voice:

"O-o-oh, beat the drum slo-o-o-oly and play the fife lowly;
Be-e-eat the dead-march as you bear me-e-e-e a-long.
Take me out to the praire-e-e and throw the sod o'er mee-e-e;
For I'm a po-o-o-or cowboy, and I know I've done wrong."

"Flatwheel is mournin' for Ike," said Tiny, who could hear the song from where the three cowboys sat against the bunkhouse.

"Mournin' for him?" queried Goober. "——, I didn't know old Flatwheel ever mourned for anybody."

"In his own way, Goober. Ike put a can of cayenne pepper in Flatwheel's boots that mornin', and them boots danged near burned Flatwheel's toe-nails off. Flatwheel found out who done it, and he's mournin' because somebody killed Ike before he had the chance."

For possibly an hour Marsh Conlan talked with Frank Dean, and then Dean rode back to Cherokee with the banker, where they got Shorty Pierce and held a talk-fest in Conlan's private office in the bank. By that time it was generally known around the town that Molly Dean had left Jack, and that Jack owed the Paragon quite a sum of money. It looked to those who knew that the meeting was being held that the two fathers-in-law were taking up the matter with the biggest creditor.

And these were the things that had happened since Barney Ellis had been killed, up to the time Henry Clay Boggs had hit Friar Tuck over the head with Oscar Johnson's guitar, because Friar Tuck took exceptions to Henry's song.

"Everybody's on edge," declared the sheriff. "All you've got to do is to sneeze in Cherokee and somebody'll shoot yuh."

And this was all very true. Cowboys took to riding in pairs, or in larger groups, and it seemed that chairs with the backs against the wall were at a premium in the Paragon and other saloons. Cowboys who ordinarily rode back from town to the ranches at night managed to transact their business early enough to allow them to get home before dark.

"Ought to git the —— milishy in here," said Henry Clay Boggs to the sheriff. "Somebody's goin' to slam a door behind me and git shot for doin' it. I'm gittin' jumpy, I tell yuh. I'm scared to talk about the Red Triangle to anybody, except you, for fear they might be one of 'em—and sometimes I ain't so —— sure about you."

"They wouldn't kill a man for talkin' about 'em, Hennery."

"How do you know? How do we know what old John Wolf and Ike Wier talked about?"

"That's true," nodded the sheriff. "I wish to gosh somebody else had this here job of mine."

" 'F yuh see two men that's hankerin' for a nervous breakdown, yuh better give 'em yore job and mine too."

"Ain't no half-witted folks around here," sighed the sheriff. "Aw, I ain't scared of anythin' I can see, but this idea of findin' dead folks with red marks on their shirts—kinda like somebody was darin' yuh to make a break."

"Well, I've shore pondered her deep," declared Henry sadly. "There's only one person I know ain't connected with that —— gang—and that's me, Henry Clay Boggs, E-squire. I s'pose the safest thing for me to do is to talk to myself."

"Well, you better lay off Friar Tuck," advised the sheriff.

"Yeah, and I s'pose that darned Oscar will want me to pay for his git-arr. But I ain't scared of Friar Tuck. If he ever makes a break at me—say, that ranny never had no business bustin' in on my song thataway. It was my song. I made her up m'self. Want to hear it, Bunch?"

"Nope, I don't want to hear yuh sing."

"Yo're shore welcome, old-timer. I dunno of anybody I'd sooner sing for than you. If I ever git so good that I can charge money for folks to hear me sing, I'll let you in free. That's how much I think of you, Mr. Sherr."

"I hope you'll never get that good, Hennery."

"Not if I practise a lot?"

"No, because somebody'll kill yuh before yuh practise enough to do yuh any good."

"I s'pose," Henry yawned widely. "I see Molly Dean has moved back with the old folks. I told Jack he'd drink himself loose from his wife one of these days. I'll betcha the Paragon owns more of the Bar D than Jack does. And Shorty Pierce is an old pal of Frank Dean, too."

"It ain't Shorty's fault, Henry. He runs a square game. Jack is a poker fool. Frank Dean can't blame Shorty for Jack's losin' his shirt. I hate to see a couple bust up thataway, but a woman can stand jist so much. I reckon Molly can pick anybody she wants. Lotsa fellers would be tickled to marry her."

"Includin' Friar Tuck," said Henry dryly. "He took her to a couple of dances before her and Jack got married."

"She could do a lot worse. Friar don't drink—much."

"Drink ain't the worst thing on earth," declared Henry, who was not at all temperate. "You ain't so —— finicky yourself when somebody issues an invite to drink, Bunch."

"Sa-a-ay, who in —— started this argument?"

"Oh, I dunno."

"Neither do I. Henry, we're like a couple of kids goin' along in the dark makin' a —— of a lot of noise to keep from bein' scared. And I tell yuh I am gettin' scared."

"Well, they ain't killed no sheriffs nor deputies—yet."

"What do yuh put the 'yet' on it for?"

"Well, they ain't yet, have they?"

Henry walked to the door, but jerked back quickly. Friar Tuck was coming across the street, heading for the office door. Henry walked toward the rear of the room, swiftly adjusting his holster. He felt sure that Friar Tuck was looking for trouble—and Henry was going to give him what he was looking for.

The sheriff saw Henry shift his gun and heard Friar's footsteps on the sidewalk, so he jumped to his feet and stepped between Henry and the door. Friar halted in the doorway. His face bore plenty of evidence that the guitar had fitted him very snugly, but he did not seem bent on destruction.

"Hello, Bunch—" he said pleasantly. He craned his neck and looked at Henry, a grin on his thin lips.

"C'mon out, Ca-roo-so," he laughed. "I reckon I got what was comin' to me for monkeyin' with the music-box."

"I'm shore glad yuh feel thataway about it," said Henry, much relieved. "Fact is, I wasn't mad at yuh, Friar—I was jist kinda on edge."

"I reckon we all are, Henry. Gosh, I dunno what the old range is comin' to. Just heard that Jack Dean and his wife have decided to live apart."

"I reckon *she* has," said the sheriff dryly.

"Mebbe that's it. Too bad, anyway. Frank Dean, Shorty Pierce and Marsh Conlan are holdin' a meetin' at the bank."

"They're all kinda interested," smiled Henry. "I wonder if Dean and Conlan won't throw in together and pay Jack's debts to Pierce?"

"They're fools if they do," declared the sheriff. "A thing like that won't help Jack out of his trouble."

"Well, he can't blame any of it on to the Red Triangle gang," said Henry.

Friar Tuck's lips shut tightly and he rubbed the heel of his right hand along the cartridges in his belt. It seemed as though his hand itched for a chance to get even with the men who had killed

Barney Ellis. The sheriff studied the face of Friar Tuck. Then—

"Friar," he said, "it's too bad you wasn't born a detective."

Friar looked up quickly.

"Why, Bunch?"

"Then yuh might figure out who this gang is."

"Yea-ah," he said slowly, "it might help a lot. Bunch, I'm goin' to get the men that killed Barney. It may take a long time, but I'll get 'em."

"You thought a lot of Barney, didn't yuh, Friar?"

Friar nodded slowly.

"I was raised with him, Bunch. My old man wasn't much of any help to me. Barney was closer than a brother. Oh, I know he admitted stealin' a horse. Whisky did that. He was square with me—square as a die. And when they killed him they killed my best friend. I'm only one against three, but they'll pay for what they done."

"They deserve it, Friar," said the sheriff. "They've killed three men. I heard Marsh Conlan say today that the county is goin' to offer a nice reward for the Red Triangle gang, and the bank is goin' to ante into the pot, too."

"You might collect that reward, Friar," said Henry.

"I don't want their —— money!" snapped Friar.

The sheriff dropped the subject, and in a few minutes Friar Tuck left town. Henry went to the Paragon to see what might be going on.

A little later Jack Dean came in. He needed a shave and some clean clothes, but was cold sober. For a man of his years Jack Dean had too many lines in his face, a face in which there was no trace of the boy left. Jack nodded shortly to Henry and bought a drink at the bar, paying for it. The bartender squinted at the coin, tossed it into the till.

"I reckon my credit is about worn out," said Jack.

The bartender nodded firmly.

"Shorty said it was, Jack."

Jack smiled and looked around the room. The drink had thawed him out a little. At this juncture Shorty Pierce came in on his return from the bank, his expression very serious. He tried to avoid Jack but did not succeed.

"I'll buy yuh a drink," offered Jack. Pierce looked him over gravely.

"You will not, Jack—your credit is no good."

Jack flushed and his right fist doubled menacingly.

"Take it easy," warned Pierce.

"Easy?" Jack laughed harshly. "Why in —— didn't yuh put on the brakes before I was broke?"

He turned from Pierce and raised his voice:

"Come up, all you fellers, and have a drink. Everybody have a drink on the biggest —— fool in the Cherokee range."

They came. Pierce stepped back and walked across the room, where he remained watching every one in the saloon drink at Jack Dean's expense and saw the bartender put Jack's money in the till. It cost Jack five dollars for that round of drinks—the last five dollars in his pocket. If Shorty Pierce had accepted, the saloon would have been twenty-five cents short on the correct amount.

Every man in that crowd knew that Jack's wife had left him, and Jack knew that they knew. A separation of this kind was something that rarely happened in the cattle ranges. As for divorces, they were unknown in the Cherokee country.

It is not to be understood that Jack Dean was broke. He had the Bar D outfit, minus his debts, but no ready cash —and no credit. The Bar D had not grown to a point where its owner might boast a bank-roll. Profits come slowly in the cattle business, especially when one started in a small way. And a saloon credit has ruined many small cattlemen.

Jack's generosity was a signal for others to treat the crowd, and many drinks were consumed. Other cowboys drifted in and joined the crowd, for it was pay-day on most of the ranches and the cowboys wanted action for their money.

Jack did not get as drunk as usual. He got fairly well "organized" and lounged around the room watching the players. It was the first time in a long while that he had stayed out of the stud game when there was one going on in his vicinity. Pierce watched him. The tall, gray-haired owner of the Paragon really felt sorry for Jack, whose eyes watched the fall of each card, his hands clenched behind him. He was like a starving man watching some one eat a full meal.

But Jack did not ask for credit. Reluctantly he left the saloon, and Pierce breathed easier. The expression of Jack's eyes worried him.

Pierce's gamblers worked on a straight salary, and all the games were on the square. But the percentage is always with the dealer and the house, so that even if a man did win he usually came back and paid good interest.

IT WAS about three o'clock the following morning when the last game broke up. The games turned their money in to Pierce, and the gamblers drifted away to bed. Since the Paragon did not keep open all night unless there was a reason for it, the night bartender gave the bar a farewell polish, put on his coat and went out.

Pierce took his money and went back to his private room, which he used as an office and sleeping quarters. It was not a big room. There was one window, but no door leading to the outside. The lights Pierce had left burning in the saloon partly lighted his room through the open inner door.

In the corner near the window was his old safe in which he had always kept his money overnight. He now knelt down to unlock it. Something crashed down on his head, and he sprawled against the safe door, knocked unconscious.

It was about six o'clock in the morning when a day bartender came to unlock the saloon and found it already unlocked. Thinking that Pierce was up, he went in, removed his coat and admitted a swamper who was there to clean up the place, when he noticed that the lamps were still burning.

"The boss must 'a' forgot to blow 'em out," grinned the swamper. The bartender noticed that Pierce's office door was open, and went to investigate.

He found Pierce sprawled on the floor, face down, his head a welter of gore. The safe door sagged open. Quickly the bartender whirled and yelled to the swamper—

"Get the sheriff and a doctor, quick!"

"What's gone wrong, Oscar?" asked the startled swamper.

"Pierce has been killed, I think. Get goin'!"

"F'r God's sake!"

The swamper took about three jumps to cross the street and slam up against the sheriff's door, hard enough to shake the whole building.

"Henry, somebody's knockin'!" The sheriff raised himself in his cot and yelled at Henry Boggs, who was occupying a cot across the room and filling the air with sleep music.

"Huh?" Henry sat up.

"Sheriff!" yelled the swamper.

"That's you," said Henry, sliding back in his blankets.

"Shorty Pierce has been killed!" cried the swamper.

"What?"

Both officers hit the floor at the same time and grabbed for their clothes.

"Didja hear me?" queried the swamper.

"What killed him?" yelled the sheriff, getting his right leg in the left leg of his pants.

"We dunno."

"Uh-huh."

"Bunch, yuh look twisted t' me," grunted Henry.

"Aw, I've got these —— pants on backwards!"

Other men were running down to talk with the swamper, who had yelled the information loud enough for nearly all of Cherokee to hear, so that there was quite a crowd around the office when the sheriff and deputy came out, half-dressed.

Some one had notified the doctor, who

was there when the sheriff arrived. Henry kept the crowd back while the sheriff and doctor made their examination.

Pierce was not dead but unconscious. The doctor was unable to state just how much of a chance he had of getting well. When they turned him over they found a bloody triangle drawn on the bosom of his white shirt—and there was also a triangle smeared on the front of the safe door, hardly visible against the black finish of the metal.

There was not a cent of money in the safe. Several of the men placed Pierce on his cot and carried him on it down to the doctor's office, while the sheriff had all the gamblers and the night bartender brought to the little office.

None of them was able to shed any light on the matter. A hasty estimate showed that Pierce had close to a thousand dollars in cash when the games checked in. The bartender said he was the last man out of the place and that Pierce had had the money in a canvas sack, ready to put it in his safe.

The window of the office was closed but not locked. It would have been possible for any one to open it from the outside, or one might have sneaked inside from the saloon and waited until closing time. But other than the triangles, there was absolutely no clue of any kind. The Red Triangle had struck again—and got away.

Pierce had been struck several times over the head. There was little doubt that the Red Triangle had thought him dead, as the insignia on his bosom would indicate.

The men of the Cherokee range were aroused, and many of them offered their services to the sheriff. But what to do with them? The sheriff shooed them away. He did not know who might be a member of the Red Triangle.

Some one suggested that the Red Triangle might have left some finger-prints on Pierce's shirt. Consequently his shirt was brought to the sheriff's office, where it was thoroughly examined.

"A-a-aw, what the ——!" snorted Henry. "S'pose yuh do find a finger-mark? Who in —— is goin' around all over this here benighted range makin' folks print their fingers on a shirt? You've got to have a match for the one yuh find, ain't yuh?"

"They do that in the East," offered a cowboy.

"Sure they do. And they've got buildin's as high as Lookout Butte and street cars an'—an'—"

Henry hesitated. He had never been East. Anyway, Henry's argument seemed sound enough, so the finger-print idea was dropped.

There was considerable speculation over what Shorty Pierce might say when he regained consciousness, but the sheriff had instructed the doctor to let no one talk with Pierce. If the Paragon owner knew who had hit him, the sheriff wanted to know it before any one else did.

Later that afternoon the sheriff went down to see Pierce. He was still unconscious.

"It is hard to tell just how badly he is hurt," explained the doctor. "It took thirty stitches to sew up his scalp. Lost quite a lot of blood, and there is probably a concussion of the brain, but just how serious I can't tell yet."

Pierce stirred slightly and opened his eyes. It seemed to the sheriff and the doctor that he was conscious.

"Who hit yuh, Shorty?" asked the sheriff. Pierce did not look at him, did not seem to hear the question.

"The Red Triangle," he said weakly. "Jack Dean—" and then he closed his eyes, sinking into a stupor again.

The sheriff and doctor stared at each other.

"Jack Dean?" wondered the sheriff. But the doctor shook his head quickly.

"Don't place any credence in what he said, Sheriff. A man in his condition is not responsible for what he says."

"I'm not," said the sheriff quickly. "Jack is a friend of mine, and I don't think he's had anythin' to do with the Red Triangle, but it shore sounds queer for Shorty to connect his name and the Red Triangle together."

"Doesn't mean a thing, Sheriff. Every one is thinking of the so-called Red Triangle gang. Perhaps Jack Dean has been on his mind lately."

"Prob'ly has," nodded the sheriff. "Shorty had to cut off Jack's credit. Jack shore needed—" The sheriff stopped.

"We all do," smiled the doctor.

He was a man of about sixty years of age, and an intensely human sort of person. Cherokee swore by Doctor Mills. He put a hand on the sheriff's shoulder.

"Bunch, don't go off half-cocked, as you often say. At least wait until Shorty regains consciousness. Perhaps he can give us a little information, but I doubt it. Don't say anything of what he has said in his delirium. The country is aroused over this Red Triangle thing, and no one knows how far men may go in a case of this kind. Personally, I believe they intended to kill Shorty Pierce."

"That's a cinch, Doc. Sure I'll wait. Jack Dean ain't goin' to pull out. But I'll be watchin' him from now on. If Shorty talks any more, you'll let me know, won't yuh?"

"No one else," promised the doctor.

As the sheriff walked to the door with the doctor, Friar Tuck came up on the porch. He had just ridden to town and had heard what happened. He shook hands with the doctor and sheriff.

"Nothin' more than you've heard, Friar," said the sheriff, in answer to Friar's question.

"Well, is he goin' to live?" asked Friar anxiously.

"We hope he will," replied the doctor.

"Good! Do yuh reckon there's any chance that he saw who hit him?"

"We're hopin'," said the sheriff.

"Uh-huh," Friar squinted one eye thoughtfully. "Sheriff, I know how yuh feel about this here proposition, but I'd sure be obliged if you'd let me in on it, as soon as yuh know anythin'."

"This is a case for the law, Friar."

"Yeah, I know."

"If you found out somethin'—would yuh tell me?"

Friar smiled thinly.

"Not until afterwards, Sheriff."

"I thought yuh wouldn't. Well, I'll go fifty-fifty with yuh. After I've got 'em behind the bars, I'll tell yuh."

"Nothin' like understandin' each other," smiled Friar. He shook hands with the doctor and walked back to the main street with the sheriff.

THE town of Cherokee was the oldest settlement in what had been originally the Blue River Valley, but better known as the Cherokee country. And, being the largest town in the county, it naturally became the county seat, but still remained a typical cow-town as far as appearances and conduct were concerned.

Fifteen miles to the north was the town of Salina, located on a transcontinental railroad. Twenty miles south of Cherokee was the town of Mission Wells, and about midway between Cherokee and Mission Wells was the little town of Rombo. Salina had become larger than Cherokee, and threatened at any time to vote the county seat away from Cherokee.

The railroad had promised a branch line to Mission Wells, but had never fulfilled the promise, so a stage line handled all the business. After crossing the north end of the valley, the railroad circled the western range of the Blue River Mountains and ran parallel, or practically parallel, with the valley. About twenty-five miles west of Cherokee was the town of Greasewood, also on the railroad, but across the range of mountains.

Blue River had its source from numerous mountain streams at the south end of the valley, augmented by Pine and Totem Creeks, which came in from the west range farther north, between Mission Wells and Cherokee. Totem Creek was the larger of the two, and it was on this stream, about six miles west of Cherokee, that Friar Tuck's Mission Cross Anchor was located. Southeast, along the same creek, was Jack Dean's Bar D ranch.

Dean's JFT outfit was located about three miles northwest of town, and the Diamond F was about the same distance to the east. Southeast of the Diamond F was the War-Whoop outfit, a horse ranch owned by "Spook" Murphy, who was a half-breed Arapaho—half Arapaho and half cavalry Irish, as Jew Mulligan would have it, but according to Mulligan, there were many different grades of Irish. Spook's mother, a pure blood Arapaho, had married a cavalry deserter by the name of Murphy, according to what was general information on the subject—and Spook was the offspring of this mixed marriage.

Spook's outfit was not too large, but he hired two nondescript punchers of mixed breeds, one known as "Sanitary" Smith, because he certainly was not, and the other known as "Hooligan," having gained his nickname from the fact that for one whole season he rode the range with only the crown of a too-small sombrero on his head. No one seemed to know what his name was—or care.

The brand mark of the War-Whoop outfit was a double arrow-head, drawn free-hand on the left side. It was an outfit that seemed to mind its own business.

Dick French owned the Diamond F, a combined horse and cow outfit of about the same size as the JFT. The Cherokee range had always been rather immune to rustlers. Of course there was the usual picking up of mavericks, which was considered legal; and it was, in a way, so considered because no man could prove ownership of a weaned calf which had not been branded.

Rumors of rustling in the Greasewood country filtered into Cherokee. A cattle detective sent in by the Cattlemen's Association had been shot and killed in Greasewood. One of the big cow outfits hired a private detective, who met the same fate. This had happened a year previous to the beginning of the Red Triangle disturbances.

The sheriff of Cherokee remembered these killings, and wondered whether some of the Greasewood gang were operating on Blue River. After he left Friar Tuck he went to the bank and had a talk with Marsh Conlan. The banker seemed greatly worried, for Shorty Pierce was a particular friend of Conlan's. The sheriff brought the conversation around to Jack Dean.

"Haven't seen him since Molly came home," said Conlan. "It seems funny that he—well, perhaps it doesn't bother him. But I don't mind telling you, Bunch, that Molly is all broke up over it. She still cares for that foolish cowpuncher."

"That's kinda funny—he was only her husband," said the sheriff dryly.

"Oh, you know what I mean, Bunch."

"Yeah, I reckon."

"I'd like to back him. Frank Dean and I talked it over with Marsh Conlan. Out of respect for Frank, Marsh was willing to mark Jack's debts off the book, but Frank wouldn't stand for it. If I was sure Jack would behave himself, I'd square things for him. But I don't know." Conlan shook his head. "I can't think straight, with all these things happening."

Jack Dean did not come to Cherokee that night, and the sheriff wondered why not. He did not impart his suspicions to Henry Clay Boggs, who seemed even more emaciated since Shorty Pierce had been robbed and almost killed.

"Got a sore neck from lookin' behind me," he told the sheriff.

"Ain't nobody goin' to hurt you, Hennery."

"Ain't they? Well, that's shore encouragin', but it fails to assure me of anythin' except that you don't know a —— thing yo're talkin' about. Want me to sing yuh a song?"

"Right there's yore drawback, Hennery," said the sheriff quickly. "You quit singin' and yo're safe."

"A-a-aw, that ain't no crime, Bunch."

"Well, it ain't—in the ordinary voice. You didn't see Jack Dean around here today, didja?"

"Not since last night. Bunch, I've

been doin' a little thinkin', do yuh know it? Jack Dean is almost broke, and Shorty Pierce cut off his credit at the Paragon and Jack—"

"You better quit thinkin', Hennery," interrupted the sheriff. "The first thing you know you'll be sayin' that Jack Dean had somethin' to do with what happened last night."

"Well, I didn't say it, did I? My God, you shore jump at things, Bunch! But it kinda seems as though you might have done a little thinkin' about it, too—you hop me so darn quick. Anyway, we've got to have a startin' point, ain't we? It don't do no harm to suspect somebody, does it? Then what are yuh faunchin' about?"

"I ain't faunchin', Hennery. You know I ain't faunchin'. I jist don't like yore idea, thasall. You jump at things too quick."

"Quick? Say, that Red Triangle has been runnin' wild and free for a long time, ain't they?"

"Jack ain't in with no Red Triangle."

"All right, Mr. Sherr. You told me to do some thinkin' and when I do, yuh—Say, Bunch, Jack ain't been in today."

"You let up on him, will yuh? Think of somebody else."

"Yea-a-ah? Mebbe I will. Yeah, I think I will do quite a little thinkin' about somebody else—and that'll be Hennery Clay Boggs, E-squire. I ain't had no vacation since I took this job, so I'll take me one."

"Thasso?" the sheriff glared at Henry. "You'd hop out on a vacation jist now, eh? You try it, cowboy."

"I'm no —— slave!"

"Well, yo're no —— vacationist either, if that's what you've got on yore mind. Go on to bed, Hennery. Tomorrow is another day."

THAT same evening Jew Mulligan and Goober Gillis rode in late to the JFT, thereby causing Flatwheel Culler, the cook, to curse them fluently.

"If you fellers think it's fash'nable to come to supper this late, you've got another guess comin'," he told them. "I've got to make fresh coffee—"

"And fresh biscuits," added Goober. "My ——, you shore can make biscuits, Flatwheel. And when it comes to cookin' a steak, I take off my hat to yuh."

"Fresh biscuits this time o' night? My ——, who do yuh think yuh are, anyway? You'll git some bacon and aigs, that's what you'll git."

"So long as we git 'em without too much gabbin'," said Jew Mulligan. "Where's the Old Man?"

"Him and Tiny went to town. The Old Man was anxious to hear how Shorty Pierce was gettin' along."

"Didja hear anythin' after we left, Flatwheel?"

"Nothin' more, Jew."

The cowboys washed noisily at the wash-bench just outside the kitchen door while Flatwheel cooked their supper. They had ridden hard and far that day, and were hardly in a merry mood. Jew Mulligan, usually in good humor, seemed rather serious.

"You ain't et nothin' that aches yuh, didja?" asked Flatwheel, smoking a cigaret while the boys ate their supper.

"Nothin' special," growled Mulligan. "These aigs ain't so fresh as they was when laid. I dunno why we don't git some hens out here, 'stead of buyin' them case things at Cherokee. And that bacon has kind of a brassy taste. Don't you notice it, Goober?"

"Yeah. Coffee's weak, too. Tastes like Yallerstone River water."

"Yea-a-a-ah!" cried Flatwheel.

He limped over to the stove and began rattling dishes. Flatwheel had acquired his cognomen when a bullet had imbedded itself in his hip years ago, causing a decided limp, which unfitted him for working with stock. He turned from the stove.

"You fellers better do yore eatin' in Cherokee. I hear they're servin' what that misguided French-Canadian cook down there calls their table de hootey meals. By ——, you et that same bacon and the same aigs for breakfast and yuh didn't kick!"

"Not these same aigs and bacon," declared Jew. "When I eat anythin' for breakfast—it's gone, *sabe?* How are yuh fixed for Durham, Flatwheel?"

"You fellers out of tobacco?"

"Rolled our last crumb a while ago."

"Yeah? Well, that's too bad. I'm sorry about the bacon and aigs, too—and the coffee. I've swallered a lot of Yallerstone River water, and I appreciate Goober's remarks."

"If we can't git anything peaceably—" said Jew meaningly.

"Hop a cripple, would yuh? Huh! You pelicans ought to git in with the Red Triangle gang."

"Here comes the Old Man and Tiny," said Goober. "I heard 'em ride in."

Flatwheel then threw his sack of tobacco on the table, and the two cowboys began rolling cigarets. Frank Dean and Tiny Breen came in. They had eaten in Cherokee.

"What's new about Shorty Pierce?" asked Mulligan.

"Still alive," said Dean. "Doc is hopeful, as usual. We didn't see Shorty. Didja bring in them horses, Jew?"

"Nope. Ye see, they wasn't there. We rode every inch of that Cherry Valley, and for miles around it. We even went to the three water-holes, and there ain't a fresh horse-track."

"Well, that's funny, Jew."

"Funny?" Jew Mulligan gruuted. "It's worse than that. Why, it ain't more than a week ago that there was twenty head of JFT horses in that valley. There's always horses there—until now."

"But where would they go?" asked Dean anxiously.

Cherry Valley was west of the JFT, a sort of a pot-hole in the hills, about a mile in circumference, where the bulk of the JFT horse herd ranged. It was an ideal spot, as there were three water-holes in the immediate vicinity.

"Me and Goober have been tryin' to figure that out," said Jew. "Mebbe they've jist scattered out naturally, but we don't believe it. Why, at least half of them broncs was broke. None of 'em were awful wild. But there ain't been a horse at any of the water-holes for a week. That looks bad. The only fresh tracks were deer tracks. You can't tell me that some of them horses wouldn't have used them water-holes, even if they was a long ways from Cherry Valley. It's natural for 'em to go back there for water."

"Do you think they've been stolen, Jew?" queried Dean.

"Well, I wouldn't swear they was, Frank—not until we've looked farther—but that's my hunch. I reckon we better go back tomorrow and be kinda sure. We can swing in from the north, circle the valley and come in from the south. It's a dead immortal cinch they won't go a —— of a long ways, unless they're bein' persuaded."

"How many did yuh see there the last time?"

"How many would you say, Goober?"

"I dunno," reflected Goober. "Prob'ly thirty head, Jew."

"At least that many. Oh, I think there was more than that, Goober."

"Yeah, I guess there was."

"Good horses, too," said Tiny.

"The best in the State," nodded Goober. "Worth a hundred dollars apiece of any man's money."

"Mebbe not on an average," said Frank Dean, who was more conservative. "But just the same, I'd hate to lose 'em."

"Well, we'll find out tomorrow," declared Mulligan. "If rustlers are workin' in Cherokee, the sooner we know it the better we'll be off. Didja see anythin' of Jack today?"

"He wasn't in town."

"There was one or two of his horses in Cherry Valley the last time we was there. He may be loser, too."

"I guess he's loser enough," said Frank Dean wearily. He got to his feet and went slowly into the living-room of the ranch-house, closing the door behind him.

"Some of us better ride out and see the kid," said Goober. "Jack's all right, only he got off on the wrong foot. He's lost his wife, temp'rarily or perm'enently—I dunno which—and he's prob'ly kinda sour on everythin'. For the Old Man's sake, we ought to kinda—well, you know what I mean."

"We'll cut down thataway after we circle Cherry Valley tomorrow," stated Mulligan. "We'll all go, unless the Old Man has different plans. I'm goin' to hit the hay, if anybody asks ye. The old vertybray is sore tonight. That jug-headed roan I was ridin' should wear stilts, so he should. I never seen a bronc that had such high ideas."

IN SPITE of the fact that the sheriff had defended Jack Dean, he saddled his horse early the following morning and rode out to the little Bar D ranch-house, which was about three miles southwest of town, on a bend of Totem Creek. It was an old place, slightly remodeled, hidden away in a grove of cottonwoods. Jack had constructed several new corrals and had built an addition to the house. Across the creek was a long stretch of meadowland.

The only sign of life about the place, when the sheriff rode up, was a small flock of chickens scratching around the yard. The house was closed, and no one answered the sheriff's hail. Though he dismounted and hammered on the door, he received no response.

The door was not locked, so the sheriff went in, going from one room to the other, but Jack was not there. On the kitchen table was the remnant of a meal and some dirty dishes, which bore evidence of having been dirty for some time.

"That meal wasn't cooked today, that's a cinch," reflected the sheriff.

The gun-rack in the living-room was empty, and investigation showed that Jack's horse and saddle were not at the stable. The sheriff came back to the house and sat down on the porch. Everything pointed to the fact that Jack Dean had left his home the day before—left hurriedly, if the dirty dishes on the table were any indication—taking his horse, saddle and rifle.

The sheriff rode back to Cherokee in a puzzled frame of mind and went to the doctor's home, where he found that Pierce's condition was practically unchanged, except that he had regained consciousness early that morning long enough to ask the doctor what had happened, then lapsed into unconsciousness again.

"If he don't know what happened, we're as bad off as ever," sighed the sheriff, and went to Marsh Conlan's home to see him.

He did not see Molly Dean, but talked out in the yard with Conlan, to whom he told what he had found at Jack's house.

"Where do you suppose he can be?" wondered Conlan.

"You know as much as I do, Marsh."

The banker looked keenly at the sheriff's deep-lined face.

"Bunch," he said, "we might as well be honest with each other. Do you think Jack had anything to do with—"

"Don't ask me that, Marsh. I don't want to think he did."

"Do you think I want to, Bunch?"

"Don't do it. Jack will be able to explain everythin'. It just looks funny, thasall."

"I hope so. But don't think we've got any monopoly on this suspicion, Bunch. Others are thinking the same thing. Everybody around here knows of Jack's troubles. I heard hints yesterday. They're connecting Jack with the Red Triangle outfit."

"That would be a —— of a mistake!"

"How would you know it's a mistake, Bunch?"

"Well, I—I—I just won't believe it of Jack."

The sheriff shook his head slowly.

"I'd shore hate to, Marsh."

"There you are. You'd blind your eyes. What we need is an outsider—some one who doesn't know anybody around here, a man who will take facts as he sees them."

"And get killed for doin' it, eh?"

"I suppose," sighed Conlan. "I hope Jack shows up."

"He better," firmly. "I'll give him the benefit of the doubt for twenty-four hours before I send out any telegrams. I'd hate to do it, Marsh. I like Jack, even if he is a fool, but I've got to do my duty, —— the luck."

IT WAS about four o'clock when Frank Dean, Jew Mulligan, Goober Gillis and Tiny Breen rode in to Cherokee. They had satisfied themselves that their horses had been stolen, having circled down through the hills to Jack's Bar D ranch, where they found what the sheriff had already seen. But they knew more.

Back near one of the water-holes in Cherry Valley they had found an old white horse, its neck broken with a rifle bullet, and on its side was drawn a huge red triangle. Some one had taken a greasewood snag and painted the triangle in blood from the horse. It seemed as if he had deliberately picked out a worthless white horse in order to leave the trade-mark.

The sheriff listened to their story without comment. It seemed that he was not surprized.

"Why don'tcha say somethin'?" asked Mulligan angrily.

"I'm plumb out of profanity," said the sheriff. "I know about Jack bein' gone. I was out there this mornin'. Shorty Pierce woke up long enough this mornin' to ask the doctor what had happened to him. I don't reckon Shorty will be of much use to us, as far as findin' out who hit him is concerned."

"It's an awful situation," said Frank Dean. "Somethin' must have happened to Jack."

"Anythin' is possible just now. I'm stuck. I don't know which way to turn, I tell yuh."

"Same here," grunted Henry Clay Boggs. "My —— neck is on a pivot. Yuh never know where it'll strike next, so I dodge every direction and pray for a little luck."

"You'll need it," declared Mulligan. "I wouldn't be surprized any mornin' for 'em to bring us word that Henry Boggs has had the red triangle painted on his bosom."

Spook Murphy and Sanitary Smith had ridden in from the War-Whoop, and now they joined the men in front of the sheriff's office.

"I just hear 'bout Pierce," said Spook. "Pretty —— bad, eh?"

"Yea-a-ah, pretty —— bad," said Sanitary. He was used to replying to Spook's questions.

"Worse than that, Spook," said the sheriff. "The Red Triangle ain't been out to see you, have they?"

"Nobody come to War-Whoop—much. What you mean this Red?"

The sheriff explained as well as he could. Spook's Irish-Indian face twisted thoughtfully.

"—— proud, eh? Like to leave mark. I watch."

"That'll be fine," said Mulligan sarcastically. "Still there's enough Irish in yer —— carcass to give ye a little brains."

Spook looked blandly at Mulligan, speaking seriously—

"How many you catch—you all Irish?"

"That's somethin' for yuh to think over!" whooped Goober.

Mulligan grinned.

"I reckon yer right, Spook. Ye have an Irish tongue. Good luck to yer watchin'."

I WAS nearing sundown in the Greasewood range. The Master Painter of them all had spread a brush of gold across the upper reaches of the main divide; above that a sheen of brilliant, but soft green, broken by purple streamers of clouds, gold-edged. The rolling range of hills was blocky with purple shadows, blue-gray on the crests.

Down a little winding valley came two cowboys, their shadows flung far ahead of them, as they traveled away from the western sun along a yellow ribbon of trail.

The man in the lead was tall, gaunt, riding a barebacked horse on which was the remnant of a bridle, his long legs clad in bat-wing chaps, his feet encased in well worn high-heeled boots. His thin face showed lines of grim determination, and his gray eyes looked straight ahead from beneath his Stetson. The man in the rear was of medium height, broad of shoulder, deep of chest. He rode bareheaded, carrying his sombrero idly in one hand. His face was square, deeply lined, his eyes as blue as the sky ahead of them. He was well mounted on a racy looking sorrel, and his riding rig was of the best, while the tall man's roan horse might well have just been unhitched from some poor man's plough.

The man in the rear smiled often as he looked at the back of the man ahead, but his blue eyes sobered quickly when he scanned the trail ahead. The tall man looked down at the trail and, turning his head slightly, said—

"That's the Ghost's track, Sleepy; he came this way."

"There's a road ahead, Hashknife," replied the other, pointing to the left-hand side of the narrowing valley. "It looks as though we was gettin' some place. Are yuh sure about that track?"

"I never made but one pair of shoes in my life, Sleepy, and I'd sure know 'em. The Ghost came along here."

Sleepy Stevens, the man in the rear, chuckled softly. Hashknife Hartley turned his head and looked back at him.

"I can't help it, cowboy," grinned Sleepy. "You look like the joker in a deck of cards. I been expectin' to see that crow-bait fall apart any time."

They drew up at the side of the road.

"This here steed ain't much to look at," agreed Hashknife, "but he's better than no bronc, Sleepy."

Hashknife dismounted and examined the road. The tracks he was seeking went north; the tracks of Ghost, his gray horse, which had been stolen from a hitch-rack in the little town of Piñon about four o'clock that morning, while Hashknife and Sleepy were deeply engaged in a poker game.

And the Ghost was a horse that Hashknife was not going to give up without a struggle. He had paid a man twenty-five dollars for this decrepit roan and a misfit bridle with which to follow the spoor of the Ghost, which wore a pair of shoes that Hashknife had made. From daylight to sundown they had trailed the thief across the Greasewood range, following cow-trails part of the way, and finally over an old Indian trail which left the tell-tale track plain enough for them to follow and make good time.

"We better look a little out," said Sleepy, as they followed the road. "The jigger that stole the Ghost prob'ly knows us by sight. I think he was in that saloon in Piñon, Hashknife. Anyway, they'd be suspicious of you and yore outfit."

"It's the best I've got," said Hashknife seriously. "If they don't like it they can lump it. If you think for a minute that I'm goin' to ride twelve hours on a sharp-backed, knock-kneed, string-halted relic like this one, and get scared of anythin' or anybody, you better think again."

Sleepy laughed softly as they rode knee-to-knee along the old highway, which was little more than a pair of ruts. As they topped a rise they saw a saddled horse coming toward them dragging a short piece of rope. At times the animal would step on the rope, jerking to a standstill, but working loose and coming on again.

"Some cowpuncher's been set on foot," observed Hashknife.

They rode up and caught the animal. It was a chunky sorrel wearing a swell-fork saddle, hand-tooled and decorated. On the right shoulder was a well-defined Bar D brand. The bridle was a split-ear and the bit was a silver-mounted spade.

"Good-lookin' outfit," observed Hashknife critically. "Bronc kinda sore-footed. Only one shoe left. Prob'ly been on a long trip."

"Don't know the brand," said Sleepy, as he removed the piece of rope and substituted his own weathered spot-cord lariat.

They rode on, leading the runaway. The road led down along a small stream, where grew stunted cottonwoods and willows, and came out at the mouth of another small valley, where they could see a cluster of buildings and corrals. Two men were near the stable, but they went to the ranch-house as Hashknife and Sleepy rode up.

One of the men was taller than Hashknife, with abnormally long legs and long sloping shoulders. One of his eyes had a decided cast; his long nose had been broken and set with a distinct bow; his jaws were stubbly with sandy hair, and he had the look about him of a man unaccustomed to bathtubs. The other was a little nondescript puncher with the face of a ferret, nervous hands and one misplaced eyebrow.

The tall one grinned lazily.

"We was jist a-fixin' to go after that bronc," he said.

The small one spat violently, nodded jerkily.

"Jist goin' to git him," he said.

"Yore bronc?" asked Hashknife.

The tall one nodded quickly.

"Mine," he said. "Broke his rope."

"Yuh ought to git him shod," said Hashknife. "He's sore in three feet. Looks like he'd pulled his shoes."

"Yea-a-ah," the tall one did not seem interested. He looked at Hashknife's horse, rubbed his chin with a bony, grimy hand. The small one began taking Sleepy's rope off the animal.

"Is this the Bar D outfit?" asked Hashknife. The small one started to speak, but turned to the tall one, as if waiting for him to answer. The tall one spat, shifted his chew of tobacco.

"No-o-o, it ain't exactly no Bar D outfit, pardner. This'n is the Lazy JN."

"Oh, yeah," nodded Hashknife. "My mistake."

The small one shot a glance at the brand on the Bar D horse as he started to lead it toward the stable.

"How's chances to stay here tonight?" asked Hashknife.

The tall one squinted toward the west where there was only a faint color of the sunset left.

"Well, I dunno," he said. "The boss ain't here, yuh see. But," he glanced at Sleepy's horse, as if appraising its value, "mebbe we can fix yuh up. Where are yuh from?"

"We rode across from Couleeville."

This was not true, but Hashknife did not want to tell him they were from Piñon.

"Uh-huh," he nodded. "Quite a trip. Lose yore saddle?"

"Poker," smiled Hashknife. "Had enough left to buy this here hat-rack."

"I didn't want t' grin," said the tall one. "I've done the same thing. Git down and stretch yore legs. Better put yore broncs in the corral. I'll throw in some hay."

"Much obliged, stranger," said Hashknife heartily.

"Not a bit. My name's Smith—Henry Smith."

"That's funny," grinned Hashknife. "Mine's Henry Smith, too. My pardner's name is Jim Smith. I suppose we're all related, if the truth was known."

"I s'pose," the tall man rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"We can have a fam'ly reunion," grinned Sleepy. "What branch of the Smith fam'ly do you belong to?"

"Branch? Huh! I didn't know there was any branches."

"There must be a family tree," said Sleepy.

"More likely a whole —— jungle," grunted Hashknife. "Let's corral these horses. I sure feel like settin' sideways on somethin'."

Henry Smith went down to the stable where he joined his little companion, while Sleepy and Hashknife went to the corral, unsaddled and hung the one saddle on the corral fence.

"Keep yore eye open," warned Hashknife. "That bronc never belonged to that sand-hill crane. Them stirrups ain't any too long for you, and he's longer in the legs than I am. And they didn't know what I meant when I mentioned that Bar D brand."

"He packs his gun on the front of his leg and he's got the bottom of the holster riveted to his chaps," added Sleepy.

"And don't neglect the little one, Sleepy. He ain't wearin' a gun—not now he ain't—but he's prob'ly got a throwin'-knife real handy. He's bad, 'cause he ain't got no brains. Lets the long one do the talkin'."

"Like I do," grinned Sleepy. "They're comin'."

The tall one carried a forkful of hay, which he dumped over the corral fence for the horses. They all walked up to the old ranch-house and went inside. The Lazy JN had evidently never felt the softening influence of a woman's hand. It was typically a man's house—and a none too clean man's, at that.

In one corner was a stone fireplace, stuffed full of débris. The floor was uncarpeted, splintered, threatening to give way in spots. The walls had been papered with newspapers, which were peeling off badly. The furniture consisted of a long table, several chairs badly in need of repair and a rocking-chair, with the back missing.

On the wall was an oil painting of a mountain lake, so terrible in perspective that one felt the lake was in grave danger of spilling out over the home-made frame. A lean-to kitchen was connected to one end of the living-room, while at the other end a doorless entry disclosed a couple of bunks built against the wall in a small room.

In the kitchen was a crippled old man, heavily bearded, puttering around. He stared through the doorway at Hashknife and Sleepy, his beady eyes full of interrogation.

"Couple of boys for supper, Shasta," called the tall one, who had designated himself as Henry Smith.

"Uh-huh. Some of you fellers better git me some wood," he said huskily. He pronounced it "wud."

"Go git the —— old fool some wood, Levis," ordered the tall one.

The little one got to his feet, working his jaws savagely.

"By ——, I never seed a cook that used so much wood," he complained. "Allus wantin' wood. Why don't Newt hire a cook that can cut his own —— wood? ——, I might as well git me a job bein' a timber-willie."

"You ain't man enough t' work in timber," retorted the cook. " 'S far as I'm concerned, yuh don't need to git no wud. Newt said somebody'd git me wud any old time I need it, and I'll bet he'll wonder why in —— I ain't got no supper ready."

"Aw, ——!" snorted Levis, the little one. He walked heavily out, swearing to himself, while the cook grinned widely, opening a huge gap in his whiskers.

"You fellers ain't used to this here country, are yuh?" asked Henry Smith, accepting some of Hashknife's tobacco.

"Never here before," replied Hashknife. "Anythin' goin' on around here?"

"Not so's yuh'd notice it."

"What's yore nearest town, Smith?"

"Greasewood. Town on a railroad, about three mile from here. The boss is down there now. His name's Case Newton. Mostly called Newt. Him and Lee Bush are down there."

"Hires three punchers and a cook, eh? Cows?"

"Mostly horses. Few cows. Most everybody raises horses here. Over across the range in the Cherokee country they raises quite a lot of cow-critters. Yuh might git jobs over there."

"Thasso?" Hashknife smoked thoughtfully. "Know anybody over there, Smith?"

"No-o-o, jist heard tell about it."

Came a crash from the kitchen, followed by the whining voice of Levis.

"There's yore —— wood! A-a-a-aw, how in —— did I know yore fry-pan handle stuck out that far? Don'cha hit me with none of yore —— cleavers! Well, yuh got yore wood, didn't yuh? My ——, some people never are satisfied!"

Levis came shuffling from the kitchen, dusting off his old shirt bosom, looking back at the cook, who was swearing over spilled food.

"Left his —— fry-pan jist where I'd have to hit it," he told them, hunching down against the wall and biting off a fresh chew of tobacco. "I hate cooks. All m' life I've hated 'em. Necess'ry evils, I s'pose. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

Crash! Something whizzed across the

room from the kitchen entrance and smashed into the wall just above Levis' head. The little man moved so quickly that the two strange cowboys hardly saw his right hand streak to the back of his collar, but they did see the flash of light on a polished blade of a throwing-knife and heard the metallic clang as it struck the stove.

Levis was on his feet like a cat. He had missed his throw, and the crippled cook was laughing at him. He turned and picked up a battered can of tomatoes and hurled them into the kitchen, where they clanked hollowly against cooking utensils.

"Throw yore —— cans of termatters at me, will yuh!" he squeaked. "By ——, I'll pin yuh!"

"Yea-a-ah, but yuh didn't!" crowed the cook. "Missed me by two feet, by ——! And you'll have t' grind a new p'int on yore toad-sticker, you little sidewinder. Take it back!"

Levis ducked sidewise, when the cook threw his knife across the room, narrowly missing the framed masterpiece. Levis picked up his knife, looked ruefully at the point and tossed it to the table.

"You'll do that once too often," declared Henry Smith. "Old Shasta'll postmortem yuh with a cleaver. Anyway, you better leave him alone, Levis. Newt likes him."

Hashknife grinned softly over his cigaret. This Lady JN was a tough outfit. Hashknife hated a knife-thrower. He shot a glance at Sleepy, who was eying Levis closely. It would be like Sleepy to throw Levis out through a window. Sleepy looked at Hashknife, and Hashknife saw the glint of amusement in Sleepy's eyes.

"Levis is sure deadly with a knife—ordinarily," explained Henry Smith. It seemed to Hashknife as if Smith was offering this as sort of a warning.

"Yeah, I s'pose," nodded Hashknife. Levis yawned and walked out on the porch. Smith looked after him thoughtfully.

"I dunno how many men Levis has nailed with a knife."

"Paralytics?" asked Hashknife seriously.

"Parry-what?"

"Paralytics—paralyzed folks."

"Oh, yeah. No, I reckon they wasn't—not before he nailed 'em."

"What's the matter?" asked Hashknife. "Ain't he heavy enough to break his own neck on a rope, or is he too —— fast to catch?"

Smith grinned slowly.

"I dunno about that. Folks ain't so very particular around here. I think I hear Newt and Lee comin'."

The tall cowboy got to his feet and walked out. Hashknife and Sleepy looked at each other and grinned. Sleepy started to open his mouth, but Hashknife signaled him to be silent, because of the cook. He turned his head and saw the old cook in the doorway, looking at them.

"Was that Newt and Lee that jist came in?" he asked, indicating in the direction of the stables with a jerk of his frowsy head.

"That's what Smith said," replied Hashknife.

"Smith? Oh, yea-a-ah. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! That little —— almost got me that time. 'F my aim had been a notch lower, I'd 'a' mashed his —— head with that can of t'matters. He's a dirty little rattler, that there Levis. You gents stayin' here t'night?"

"We hope to," smiled Hashknife.

"Hope? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Well, yuh won't git poisoned, so yuh can enjoy yore food."

Three men came up on the porch, and the cook dodged back into the kitchen. Smith came in first, followed by Newton and Lee Bush. Newton was a huge, black-bearded man, slightly round-shouldered, with a great nose and gimlet-hole eyes. Bush was of medium height, bowlegged, sallow complexioned. His temples were deeply sunken and his cheek-bones flaring, which gave him a death's-head appearance. This was not lessened by the fact that all of his front teeth were missing. On both lips were half-healed scars, attesting to the fact that Lee Bush had had his teeth forcibly removed from without.

Henry Smith made the introduction.

"Case, these here two punchers are named Henry and Jim Smith, and they aim t' stay here t'night. Gents, this here is Case Newton, owner of this here ranch, and this other person is named Bush—Lee Bush, exactly."

"Hyah," grunted Newton.

Bush merely bobbed his head and went into the bunk-room. Newton sat down in the backless rocking-chair and rolled a smoke.

"I hear that you boys are jist a-headin' through," he said.

"Yeah," Hashknife nodded. "But we dunno how far through we'll go."

"Yuh don't, eh. Lookin' for work?"

"No-o-o, just lookin' the country over."

"Uh-huh. From Couleeville, eh?"

"Thereabouts."

"How come yuh didn't go on to Greasewood? It ain't more than three miles."

"Didn't know about it until we got all set here. Prob'ly go there in the mornin'."

"Mm-hah," Newton inhaled deeply. "Never been here before, eh?"

"Nope."

"Hey, Shasta!" Newton yelled toward the kitchen. "How about a little food!"

"Come and git it! So —— much gabbin' goin' on that I held back, Newt."

They filed out into the kitchen and lined up at the long table. It was the first food Hashknife and Sleepy had eaten that day, and they thoroughly enjoyed the culinary efforts of old Shasta. Levis didn't seem to enjoy his supper. He kept one eye on Shasta, who also watched him. Hashknife noticed that Newton often looked in his direction. There was little conversation at the table. When the Lazy JN sat down to eat—they ate. Sleepy grew fascinated watching Henry Smith eat beans with a knife, and it seemed that Smith was just as much amazed to see Sleepy use a fork.

"Never got used to 'em," he said. "The —— things leak."

"You'll cut yore throat some day," said Sleepy seriously.

"Not me. I could eat beans off a razor blade."

"I'll betcha yuh could. You folks are real handy with knives."

Sleepy looked directly at Levis, who shot a quick glance at Shasta. Newton saw this, and turned his head toward Shasta.

"You —— fools been quarrelin' ag'in?" he asked.

"He tried to mash his head with a can of ter-matters," complained Levis. "I'm shore learnin' him to dodge my knife."

Newton turned to Shasta.

"You quit throwin' termatters, Shasta. Them things cost money, don'tcha know it? Git yoreself a gun, you darned old woodchuck. Swappin' a can of termatters for a knife! My ——, the next thing I know, I won't have no cook."

"I'll git him some day, too," growled Levis.

"Shut up, you —— little sidewinder!" roared Newton. "You talk too much. 'F you'd do more work and less practisin' with yore knife, you'd be worth somethin' to me. Some day I'm goin' to kick yuh plumb out of the country. Pass me them beans—and don't talk back—or that some day is right now."

Evidently secure in his position, Shasta came to the table beside Hashknife and put on more food.

"Don't pay no attention to these —— fools, stranger," he said. "Fellers that talk thataway never do nothin'—not openly."

Newton glared at Shasta, who glared back at him. Cooks of Shasta's breed are hard to find, and Newton knew it. Hashknife laughed, but his eyes were serious. There was a warning in the old man's statement— "Fellers that talk thataway never do nothin'—*not openly*."

There was nothing more said during supper. After smoking a cigaret in the main room, Hashknife suggested that he and Sleepy spend the night in the stable.

"We don't want to deprive anybody of their beds. Give us a couple of blankets and we'll hive up in the hay."

"We've got plenty of room," assured

Newton quickly. "Bush and Levis always sleep in the loft; me and Henry sleep in there," pointing at the open doorway, "and there's our up-stairs room—two beds, and nobody usin' 'em."

The up-stairs bedroom proved to be just the place where Hashknife and Sleepy did not want to spend the night. The plan of the Lazy JN ranch-house would have driven an architect wild. It seemed that an extra room had been built on what would be part of the roof of Newton's bedroom, and a rickety pair of stairs, almost perpendicular, led up to the doorway.

Newton showed them up, lighting a lamp after they were up. The room was about ten feet by twelve, lighted by one window, and with no exit except the stairs. It contained two bunks built in against the wall, a small table and one chair.

"This will be fine," yawned Hashknife, sitting down on a bunk. "I'm sure goin' to pound the old ear hard tonight."

"It ain't a bad place to sleep," admitted Newton. "If yuh want to sleep late in the mornin', go ahead. Shasta'll give yuh breakfast any old time."

He went back down the stairs, and they heard him talking with Henry Smith in the living-room. Hashknife went over to the window and looked out. It was a straight drop of at least fifteen feet.

"Looks like a trap," whispered Sleepy. Hashknife nodded, as he picked up a blanket and wound it around his left arm.

Suddenly he lunged across the floor, crashing against the window, smashing out the glass and wrecking the flimsy frame. It made a terrific noise. Hashknife flung the blanket back on the bed and began swearing loudly. He kicked Sleepy on the ankle.

"Laugh hard!" he whispered, between curses. And Sleepy did his part in fine style.

"What's the matter?" yelled Newton from the bottom of the stairs.

"Stubbed my toe and fell half-way through that —— window!" snorted Hashknife. "Gosh, I'm afraid I've ruined it, Newton."

Sleepy continued to laugh, and Hashknife turned savagely on him.

"Laugh about it! My gosh, you'd laugh at anythin'!"

"I'll come up and fix it," offered Newton.

"Aw, it's all right," replied Hashknife. "We'll hang a blanket over it. Give me that blanket, Sleepy."

Hashknife picked up their boots and chaps, and walked to the window, tearing loose what remained of the frame, and tossing it with the boots and chaps outside.

"That's fine," said Sleepy.

"Didja cut yourself?" yelled Newton.

"Nope," said Hashknife. "It's a wonder I didn't. Well, good night, boys."

"Good night," called Newton.

Hashknife and Sleepy sat down on their bunks and looked at each other. Hashknife motioned for Sleepy to lie down, and blew out the lamp. It was moonlight, and a cool breeze came in through the smashed window. Hashknife had done a good job of it, not even leaving a splinter of glass.

Hashknife did not know just why the owner of the Lazy JN put them up in that bedroom, but he felt sure there was a reason. It was very quiet up there. He could hear Newton and Smith downstairs, the low hum of their conversation, which finally died down.

THROUGH the window Hashknife could see the moon etched across by the limbs of a cottonwood. It was possibly an hour later that he heard a door close softly somewhere in the house. He stepped to the window, leaning cautiously out and saw two men going toward the stable. They halted at the corral and seemed to be looking at the two horses.

It was difficult to identify either of the men, but Hashknife was satisfied that they were Newton and Smith. Sleepy came up behind Hashknife. The two men outside left the corral and went to the stable. Hashknife squeezed Sleepy's arm warningly, slid over the sill and dropped quickly, falling to the ground, but quickly recovering to give Sleepy room to drop. Luckily the ground was free of stones. They quickly found their boots and chaps, which they put on in the shadow of the cottonwoods.

"Well, we're out and we can't get back in," said Sleepy.

"If you think I want to be back in, yo're crazy," whispered Hashknife. "Newt and Smith have gone to the stable. The place is all wrong, cowboy. Unless I'm mistaken, the old cook was handin' us a warnin'. C'mon."

Hashknife led the way. They circled the corral, keeping as much in the shadow as possible. There was a light in the stable loft, shining dimly through the cracks in the wall. From the ground outside they were unable to hear anything except the dull hum of voices.

Cautiously they edged around the building to the door, which was partly open. About midway of the stable they could see the square opening in the ceiling which led to the loft, slightly illuminated by lantern light from above. Softly they crossed the floor and halted in a vacant stall next to the ladder, where they could hear the voices plainly. Newton was talking, and seemed mad about something.

"Well, what in —— could we do?" snorted Smith. "He follered Levis all the way in. ——, he wasn't two miles behind him."

"And he rec'nized me, too," declared Levis. "I could see that, couldn't you?"

"Cinch," growled Smith. "The only thing we could do was to bat him on the head, Newt. Why, —— it, them three horses are in the corral back of the stable here."

"How did yuh happen to take them Bar D horses, anyway?" demanded Newton. "Wasn't there enough other ones?"

"Well, I seen 'em in that corral," said Levis defiantly. "There wasn't nobody to home, so I took 'em. This jigger shows up and takes after me, but I slipped loose after while. He picked me up on this side of the range ag'in. I'll tell yuh, he's a salty *hombre*."

"What about those other horses?"

"Waitin' at the church, I s'pose. I traveled too —— fast to stop and inquire."

"That's what a —— fool like you gets for disobeyin' orders. You were to meet the Mask and take the horses, Levis."

"Oh, ——, I know it, Newt. I've got 'em before. Who is that masked puncher?"

"Find out if yuh can. The question is, what will we do with this feller?"

"What can we do?" asked Smith. "He knows too —— much for us to take any chances. He's awake now, but I've stuffed his —— ears full of cotton and tied it tight. He couldn't hear the crack of a gun. But what's the difference if he does hear, Newt? He knew it all before I hit him."

"I reckon that's right. Now what about these Smith brothers? They caught that Bar D horse, did they?"

"Not more than fifteen minutes after we packed this jigger up here in the loft," said Smith. "They think it's my bronc?"

"Like —— they do!" snorted Bush. "You try and slip anythin' over on that tall one. He looks plumb through yuh."

"And that's the jigger yuh stole the gray horse from at Piñon early this mornin', eh, Smith?"

"Jist exactly," replied Smith. "I seen him in the saloon."

"How do yuh reckon he trailed yuh straight here?"

"I've been wonderin', Newt."

"Sounds like he didn't have no sense," laughed Bush.

"We better git that gray bronc away from here before daylight," said Levis uneasily. "Yuh can't tell what them fellers might do."

"That's a good lookin' bronc and saddle the short one is ridin'," observed Smith. "I kinda like that outfit."

"We've got to figure out what to do about them," said Newton. "If they was able to follow that horse from Piñon to here, they probably know where the horse is right now."

"Yo're —— tootin'!" exclaimed Levis

anxiously. "You say they're asleep up there, Newt?"

"Yeah," Newton laughed. "The tall one fell against the winder and smashed it out. Yuh should 'a' heard him cussin' and the other feller laughin' at him."

"You say he smashed the winder out?" Bush jerked out the sentence quickly. "Smashed it out, eh? Newt! Are you —— good and sure they're still in that room?"

"What do you mean, Lee?"

"Well, by ——, a man don't ordinarily fall against a winder and knock it out thataway, Newt. I'll betcha they ain't in that room!"

"Well, it won't take a —— of a long time to find it out. C'mon!"

Hashknife and Sleepy crouched in the corner of the dark stall, hardly daring to breathe while the four men climbed down from the loft and hurried out of the stable. They left the lantern burning. They heard one of the men snap a padlock in the door and realized that they were locked in.

Without speaking a word, Hashknife led the way to the ladder and they went quickly up into the loft, which was partly filled with hay. Two sets of blankets were on some hay near the head of the ladder.

Hashknife lifted the lantern off a nail and led the way back into the deeper hay. Here they found a man lashed tightly with ropes. Hashknife's pocket-knife soon removed the bonds, and the man sat up, staring vacantly at them. It was Jack Dean of Cherokee, though of course Hashknife and Sleepy did not know him.

One side of his face was streaked with dried blood, and he seemed dazed. Hashknife cut the gag from his mouth—a dirty cloth encircling his ears, which had been stuffed with dirty cotton.

"Do yuh know what's goin' on, pardner?" whispered Hashknife.

Jack mumbled something which they were unable to decipher.

"Can yuh walk?" asked Hashknife. "You've got to walk, cowboy. It's walk or get shot, *sabe?*"

Jack nodded and got unsteadily to his feet. He was cramped from the bonds, and gritted his teeth against the pain of returning circulation.

"We're locked in," explained Hashknife. "These horse-thieves will shoot on sight. They'll be here in a minute. Yore bronc and mine are here in the stable. Our other bronc is out in the corral. Our horses go with us."

Jack nodded. Hashknife had given him the whole thing in a few short sentences.

"Got an extra gun?" he asked.

Hashknife reached inside his loose shirt and drew out a short black gun.

"Here's my emergency," he whispered. "Only got six shells. It's a .38. Not a —— of a lot of good except when yuh need it bad. Save ammunition as much as possible."

Jack nodded and rubbed the palm of his hand over the gun.

"I choose the tall one who hit me," he said painfully.

Hashknife laughed and hung the lantern on the nail.

"No more talkin'—no noise. C'mon and see if yuh can find and saddle yore own bronc in the dark. Sleepy, glue yore ear to the front door and let us know when they come."

Hashknife found Ghost. He was in the last stall, and nickered softly when Hashknife spoke to him. At the rear of the stall was Hashknife's saddle. The moment his hands touched the fork he knew it was his. The blanket was draped over it.

The darkness made no difference to Hashknife, and in a few moments he had saddled and bridled the Ghost, looped up the tie-rope and turned the animal around, heading out of the stall. There was a runway about eight feet wide between the rear of the stalls and the wall, and this led directly to the door.

Leaving the Ghost, Hashknife went back and found Jack saddling his horse. Jack was still a little weak and dazed, so Hashknife helped him saddle and turn the horse around. Then Hashknife went to Sleepy, who was against the door.

"They know we ain't there," chuckled Sleepy. "I heard one of 'em yellin' somethin' about us. I think they're comin'!"

Some one was running across the yard. Hashknife whispered some quick instructions to Sleepy and ran back along the runway.

"Get on yore bronc," he said to Jack. "Foller my lead."

They could hear some one talking excitedly and the sound of men running on hard ground. Then came the rattle of the padlock as some one fumbled with the key. The door swung outward, showing several of the men. At the same instant Hashknife swung the tall gray into the runway, spurring him straight for the door. The floor was slippery, but the powerful gray lurched ahead, snorting from the rip of Hashknife's spurs, and went out like a catapult, while behind it came Jack Dean's chunky sorrel, rearing high as he struck the open, while the men of the Lazy JN fell backward to keep from being annihilated.

The two riders were almost to the main gate before the men of the Lazy JN recovered from their astonishment.

"That's the two Smiths!" exploded Newton. "By ——, they got that gray and the sorrel!"

"The dirty thieves!" roared Levis. "Let's get 'em!"

"Get ——!" snorted Bush. "Yuh never can catch them two. Let's see if we've still got our man in the loft."

The four men ran through the stable and scrambled up the ladder, while Sleepy stepped calmly from behind an old oat-box near the door, walked outside, closed and locked the door softly and ran toward the little corral. By the time he reached it, Hashknife and Jack had circled back and were coming in from the opposite side.

Sleepy saddled quickly, pausing now and then to laugh. They could hear the Lazy JN outfit down at the stable swearing bitterly when they found the door locked. But Sleepy did not delay in saddling. The old stable would be easy for them to force their way out of, but it would give the three riders plenty of time to make their getaway.

"He-e-ey! What th' —— is goin' on out there?"

It was Shasta's voice calling from the kitchen door. Hashknife turned in his saddle.

"You better stay where yuh are, Shasta!" he yelled. "We've got yore outfit locked in the stable, and we're leavin' yuh right away. Don't try to horn in, old-timer."

"You've got 'em locked in the stable? By ——, that's good! Sa-a-ay, you long-geared *pelicano,* have yuh got an extra horse?"

"What for?" asked Hashknife.

"For me to ride. I've been tryin' to git away from this outfit for a year, and this is the first time I ever felt free to rattle my hocks."

"Can yuh ride bareback, Shasta?"

"Can I? All I ask is four legs and a neck to loop m' rope around. Whoo-ee-e-e-e!"

"Put the bridle on that Piñon work-horse, Sleepy," said Hashknife. "They stole our horses, so we'll steal their cook."

Shasta came hobbling down from the kitchen carrying his hat in one hand and a sawed-off shotgun in the other. Sleepy helped him mount. A revolver thudded from inside the stable, and the bullet went humming over their heads. Some one was shooting from a crack in the wall.

"That stable won't hold 'em long," declared Shasta. "They'll bust a board off."

"They've still got three of my horses," said Jack. "Wish I knew where they are."

"Prob'ly in the corral behind the stable," said Shasta. "I'll git 'em out for yuh."

Before any one could stop him he spurred the decrepit roan down past the stable. Hashknife started to follow him, but a bullet hummed so close to his ear that he whirled his gray back to the shelter of the corral. Sleepy took a shot at the flash.

Wham! Boom! Both barrels of the shotgun roared down by the rear corral, and Shasta's high-pitched voice:

"Git back in yer hole —— yuh! I ain't throwin' no cans of termatters now, you slick-ears! I hope t' ——, I hit Levis. I'm all set with two more shells, gents. You've done lost yore cook, an' if yuh peek out at me ag'in you'll lose yore appetite! Git out of here, you jugheads! Don'tcha know where the gate is?"

The three Bar D horses came running up through the yard, while behind them galloped Shasta, chuckling to himself. Sleepy cut in between the horses and the house, sending them galloping straight for the main gate. Behind him came the rest of the boys.

"Straight ahead!" yelled Shasta. "*Adios*, you *cuatreros!*"

They headed down the road, driving the three loose horses ahead of them, pounding along in the moonlight. Behind them the Lazy JN ranch was blotted out in the darkness.

"They won't try to foller us, will they?" asked Sleepy.

"They'll try anythin'," declared Shasta. "You don't know that gang, pardner. I've been with 'em a year—and I know. They had a board almost off the back of the stable, but I shore made 'em hunt a new one."

"How did you happen to be with 'em so long, Shasta?" queried Hashknife.

"Couldn't git away. It's a —— of a long ways out of this country for a cripple t' walk, and I knowed too much for 'em to take any chances on me. But I've got 'em beat now, by golly."

"I don't know yet what it's all about," complained Jack.

"Well, there ain't nobody goin' to stop and explain to yuh," laughed Hashknife. "Anyway, you know as much as we do, pardner."

"My name's Dean—Jack Dean."

"My name's Hartley. My pardner's name is Stevens, and Shasta will have to tell yuh his name."

"Jones," said Shasta. "J-o-n-e-s, Jones. Shasta Jones. By ——, I knowed you fellers wasn't named Smith. I shore tried to warn yuh to look out for that Lazy JN outfit."

"Yuh did, Shasta," said Hashknife. "We appreciate it—and it helped a lot. I'm pleased to meet yuh."

"I'm pleased to meet you," said Shasta seriously. "The only thing I'm sorry about is that I didn't kill Levis before I left. Mebbe I did—I dunno. I got along pretty good with the rest of the gang. Newt didn't treat me bad. Mebbe it was 'cause he needed a cook. I'm a good cook, if anybody rises to ask yuh, —— too good to cook for a lot of horse-thieves."

"Speakin' of cookin'," said Jack Dean, "I ain't had nothin' to eat for a couple of days, it seems to me. Mebbe we can rustle some grub in Greasewood."

"And get us a place to sleep," said Hashknife.

"Like ——!" snorted Shasta. "We don't sleep in Greasewood, gents—at least, I don't. I'll bet that Lazy JN outfit is saddlin' up right now to come to Greasewood. They'll figure we'll stop there. Don'tcha realize what our escape means? We can send that whole bunch to the pen. My ——, I know more about 'em than they do. Nossir, I don't stay in Greasewood."

"Ain't there no sheriff in Greasewood?" asked Sleepy.

"Yea-a-ah, the best friend Case Newton's got. And they've got a jail big enough to hold all of us until they got a chance to shoot us for tryin' to escape. I know this country as well as I know how to bile coffee. This place is so salty yuh don't even have to season yore soup."

"Well, I'm goin' to get some food in Greasewood, even if I have to fight the sheriff for it," declared Jack. "That's how empty I am."

"Let's rope them three loose horses," suggested Sleepy. "We can't be bothered herdin' 'em all the time."

"There's a loadin' corral at Greasewood," stated Shasta Jones. "We'll head 'em in there."

"Yeah, and I'll shift my saddle to one

of 'em," said Jack. "This horse of mine is too sore-footed to hit that trail through the mountains."

"Through the mountains?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah, to Cherokee. It's a good long twenty-five miles and the goin' is kinda bad in spots. But you boys better go along, unless you've got a better place in view. You can bunk in at my ranch as long as yuh want to."

"You got a cook?" asked Shasta.

"Nope, ranch ain't big enough, Shasta."

"Big enough if you've got a stove."

"But I can't afford a cook, Shasta."

"No-o-o? Well, I worked a year for Case Newton, and I never got anythin' out of it, except my board, room and tobacco, so you don't need to worry a lot about me."

"How about goin' to Cherokee, Sleepy?" asked Hashknife.

"I reckon that was all settled in yore mind when we heard that Lazy JN outfit talkin' in the hay-loft."

THEY let Shasta Jones lead the way to the loading corral, where they caught the horses without much trouble, and Jack Dean moved his saddle on to a brown mare. They linked the three horses together and led them back to the main street. Shasta did not want to be seen by anybody, so he stayed with the horses at a hitch-rack.

The stores were all closed, but they found a little Chinese restaurant near a honkatonk saloon where the Chinaman was willing to put up a quick lunch for Jack to eat on the way. Several men were eating in the place, and Hashknife noticed that one of them, a big square-headed sort of man, seemed unduly interested in them.

The Chinaman said something that Jack did not understand.

"He wants to know if yuh want pie, Jack," said Sleepy.

"A whole one, if he's got that much," grinned Jack. His face was streaked with blood and dirt, and he tried to wipe some of it off with his sleeve.

The big square-headed man got up from his table and sauntered up to them, as if waiting to pay the Chinaman for his meal, and as his coat sagged back a little Hashknife saw the lamplight flash on his star.

The Chinaman came with the lunch, wrapped in a newspaper, and Jack paid him the few cents he asked. As they turned to go, the sheriff stepped up to Jack.

"Hello, Jack Dean," he said pleasantly. "Don'tcha know me?"

The three men halted, while Jack looked at the sheriff. Hashknife had stepped slightly past the officer, but now he turned.

"You've got the best of me, pardner," said Jack.

"Sure? Yo're Jack Dean, ain't yuh?"

"Yeah, I'm Jack Dean."

"Fine! I've got a warrant for you, Dean—for murder and robbery."

"A what?" Jack moved toward him. "A warrant for me?"

"Telegraphed from Cherokee."

"That's a lie!"

The sheriff reached for his gun, but before he could draw it Hashknife whipped his long left arm around the sheriff's neck and his right knee caught him in the middle of the back just above his hips. With a sharp backward jerk he dropped the astonished officer flat on the floor, jerked his gun away from him and was backing toward the door before any one knew just what had happened.

"Out to the horses!" he snapped. "Get goin'!"

Sleepy and Jack ran back toward the rack, while Hashknife stood in the doorway idly swinging the sheriff's gun in his hand. The sheriff sat up, goggling around owl-eyed. He had hit the floor very hard.

"Come on!" yelled Sleepy. Hashknife threw the sheriff's gun in the street as he ran toward the hitch-rack. The boys were mounted and Sleepy was holding Hashknife's gray. He climbed on and they whirled their horses around, Jack leading the three linked horses.

"This way!" yelled Jack.

As they spurred into the street, several horsemen were riding swiftly into town. Some one, possibly the sheriff, fired from the restaurant doorway, and one of the oncoming horses pitched headlong in the street, flinging its rider heavily.

It was the Lazy JN outfit. Hashknife recognized Newton as he turned his horse in the light from a saloon window and fired at the figure in the restaurant doorway.

As Hashknife whirled his horse, after getting a glimpse of Newton, he saw a sheet of flame spurt from Shasta's old riot-gun, and the heavy report echoed back from the false-fronted buildings. He swung low on his horse, following the others, sending shot after shot at the gyrating figures of men on horses, which seemed to be doing their level best to get out of range. Hashknife caught up with the others a few hundred yards out of town, and found that no one had been hurt.

"I choosed me that —— Levis!" crowed Shasta. "Danged old gun almost knocked me off this bronc. Wasn't Newt shootin' at the sheriff, Hartley?"

"I think so, Shasta. My gosh, that was a close call!"

"Didja lose yore lunch, Jack?" asked Sleepy.

"No, I hung on to that all right. But what gets me is that lyin' sheriff sayin' he had a warrant for me for murder."

"Oh, ——, that was jist an alibi to jail yuh," declared Shasta. "I told yuh they played the game with Newton. But we're all right now—they won't foller us any farther."

Hashknife rode in close to Jack.

"How long since you left home?" he asked.

"Wednesday. I rounded up these three horses, put 'em in my home corral and went out to get some more. It was kinda late when I came back, and I seen a feller leadin' all three of these horses away with him, so I took after him. But I lost him in the dark.

"There's a trail through the range from Cherokee to Greasewood and I figured he'd take it. There were so many tracks on it that I couldn't tell whether he was ahead of me or not, so I took a chance and came on.

"I lost it a lot of times that night, and it was almost daylight when I got through to this side. I waited for daylight. I dunno where this feller stayed, but I've got a hunch he knew I was waitin' for him and hid back along the trail. I spent most of the day watchin' this end of the trail and then started for Greasewood. I didn't want to ride back in the dark.

"I got quite a ways from the trail, when I seen this feller and my three horses. Mebbe he had a pair of glasses. Anyway, he done a lot of fancy dodgin' and hidin', and coverin' country at the same time.

"But I stuck pretty close, and he wasn't far ahead of me in gettin' to the Lazy JN. I was sure he went there, but I didn't have nothin' to prove it. I met that tall feller, and he seemed pleasant enough until I got off. Then he hit me over the head with somethin' and I didn't know much until I woke up in the hay. What day is this?"

"It's after midnight, I reckon, so that makes it Friday."

"Yeah? Well, I reckon I wasn't knocked out very long, after all. But why would that sheriff say he had a telegram from the sheriff at Cherokee?"

"You didn't kill anybody, didja, Dean?"

"No! Oh, that part of it is a lie."

"Well, I did!" snorted Shasta. "I had that —— Levis right on my old sight, and if he lives after them twelve buckshot quit annoyin' him, he's tougher 'n I think he is."

"The sheriff stopped one of 'em," laughed Sleepy.

"And the last I seen, the owner of the Lazy JN was heavin' lead at the sheriff," added Hashknife delightedly.

"Hurrah f'r our side!" chuckled Shasta. "This is m' big night, boys. I've dreamed of gittin' even with that danged crooked outfit—and it came true. I ain't naturally no killer, but you jist try cookin' for fellers like Levis and Smith and Bush for a year an' see what happens to yuh. Well, you got a sample of it—my can of termatters agin' his knife. Oh, I'd 'a' killed him with a tin can eventually, I s'pose."

"Why didn't yuh use the shotgun on him?" asked Sleepy.

"Never had none. Newt kept it locked up. When I knowed what you fellers was up to tonight, I smashed the lock with my cleaver. Nossir, I never had nothin' but a cleaver and canned goods—and I prefer canned goods. They throw better."

"The trail starts in about half a mile," announced Jack. "If we don't lose it in the dark we'll eat breakfast at my place, boys."

"Yeah, and I'll cook her, too" declared Shasta—and added, "If somebody'll rustle me some wud."

WHEN Shorty Pierce died without regaining consciousness again, the sheriff decided to broadcast orders for the apprehension of Jack Dean. It was something he did not want to do, but there had been so many hints of suspicion against Jack that he decided to find the young man, if possible, and try and clear up these suspicions.

The sheriff talked it over with Marsh Conlan before sending the wires to other sheriffs, and Conlan was of the opinion it was the best thing to do. Hence one of the wires went to the sheriff at Greasewood.

The information that the Red Triangle outfit had stolen horses from the JFT spread quickly over the Cherokee range, and every outfit proceeded to make a hasty check of their herds. As near as the JFT could determine, they were short about thirty head. Mulligan, Gillis and Breen combed the hills looking for anything that might indicate where the horses had been taken, but found nothing.

Frank Dean made no comment when Goober Gillis brought him the information that a warrant had been issued for Jack, but he went to Cherokee for confirmation.

"I had to do it, Frank," said the sheriff. "There's been so much talk about Jack, so I decided to give him a chance to disprove all this suspicion. We ain't got no idea where he is. Me and Henry was out to his ranch ag'in this mornin', and he ain't been there since we was there before."

"Oh, I'm not worried about the charge against him," said Frank Dean. "But I am afraid that somethin' has happened to him."

"Why?"

"Well, with all this devilish Red Triangle stuff—who knows what might happen?"

"I reckon that's very true, Frank. We'll jist have to wait and see what turns up."

Friar Tuck met them on the street. His thin face seemed even more thin today and the lines deeper.

"I've tallied most of my horses," he said, in response to the sheriff's question. "I don't think I'm loser—yet. What's all this talk about Jack?"

The sheriff explained his reasons for wanting Jack. Friar Tuck shook his head slowly.

"I don't think yo're on the right track, Bunch. I've follered this proposition pretty close and it don't look to me as though Jack Dean was in on it. It don't look reasonable."

"I feel the same about it, Friar. But if I didn't try to find Jack Dean, folks would say that I was playin' favorites. Anyway, I'd shore like to know where he is. —— it, I wish I had somethin' to work on. It's a blank wall, as far as I'm concerned."

Friar nodded.

"I wish I could help yuh, Bunch. I'm doin' all I can. I swore I'd get the men that killed Barney Ellis, and I'll do it. They shot him down like a dog."

"And they've done a lot more than that, Friar."

"Yeah, I know. But they called Barney to the door and shot him, Bunch. He didn't have a chance— Three to one."

"And they never leave a clue, the dirty snakes!"

Friar smiled bitterly.

"They do cover up pretty well, Bunch."

THE Diamond F failed to report a loss, and Spook Murphy rode in to tell the sheriff that none of the War-Whoop horses were missing, as far as he could tell.

Dick French of the Diamond F was rather interested in the disappearance of Jack Dean.

"He was goin' to sell me some horses," said French, talking to a crowd in the Paragon. "He said he was short of money, so I was gettin' a bargain. But he never showed up with the animals, and now there's a warrant for him."

"His horses prob'ly went into the horse-thief's pot," said Henry Boggs pessimistically. "Jack prob'ly got busted over the head, that's what happened to him. Watch for magpies and buzzards, that's my idea."

"You ought to go out and bust up that Red Triangle gang, Henry," said French.

"Oh, yea-a-a-ah! I was hired to help Bunch Sherr. When he needs help—I'm Johnny-at-the-rat-hole. But as far as I'm pers'nally concerned, I'd rather be a live coward than a dead hero. Yuh git a —— of a lot more out of life."

"The man that cleans up the Red Triangle gang will get a marble monument right in the main street of Cherokee," declared Chuck Liggett, the gambler, who had taken charge of the Paragon.

"Yeah—and he'll be planted under it," declared Henry. "That monyment won't do him a —— bit of good, except mebby to keep the coyotes from diggin' him up."

"Yo're scared, ain't yuh, Henry?" asked Oscar, the bartender.

"I am. M' pride is all that keeps me from runnin' right off across the hills—pride and a corn on my little toe. And if things git any worse, I'm goin' to forgit that —— corn."

Henry left the saloon and was going across the street toward the office when the stage drew in from Salina. The driver called to him and handed him a telegram for the sheriff.

The sheriff was in the bank talking with Marsh Conlan when Henry gave him the telegram. It was from Greasewood. It read:

WILLIAM LEVIS AND LEE BUSH KILLED AND SHERIFF BADLY HURT IN ATTEMPT TO ARREST JACK DEAN HERE LAST NIGHT. DEAN WITH TWO OR THREE MEN IN HIS GANG ESCAPED.

—SHREVE, DEPUTY SHERIFF.

The sheriff read it aloud, while Henry Boggs listened, mouth open, and Marsh Conlan leaned heavily against his desk. The sheriff lowered the yellow sheet of paper and stared at the two men.

"Jack Dean and his gang, Marsh," he said slowly. "One of my telegrams was to the sheriff at Greasewood."

Conlan nodded slowly.

"My God, I'll betcha there was somethin' doin' over there in Greasewood!" exclaimed Henry Boggs. "Wish I could 'a' seen it. Downed three men and got away."

"Ain't you got enough troubles right here without wishin' for more?" asked the sheriff testily.

"Invisible troubles, Bunch. I like shootin'—when yuh can see who to shoot at."

IT DID not take long for the news to spread over Cherokee. Frank Dean was in the restaurant when one of the boys brought him the news. Immediately he hunted up the sheriff and read the telegram.

"My God, what's got into that boy?" he wondered. "Don't yuh suppose there might be a mistake in this, Bunch?"

"I wish there was, Frank, but this deputy seems sure of it. What was Jack doin' in Greasewood, I wonder?"

But that was a question that none of them could answer. Marsh Conlan carried the news to Jack's wife, and later he came to the sheriff's office with her.

Molly Dean was a tall, slender, brown-haired girl, handsome rather than beautiful. Bunch Sherr always felt bashful in the presence of Molly Dean because she had a disconcerting habit of looking him straight in the eye when she talked. And those big level blue eyes were filled with tears now—and Bunch Sherr weakened at sight of tears.

"Yuh-yes'm, that's the telegram," he told her. "Nosir-ma'am, I dunno anythin' more—not a dern thing."

"But you don't believe Jack has done anything wrong, do you, Mr. Sherr?"

"No'm, I—I—well, yuh see, I—I—" he glared at Marsh Conlan, as if Marsh had deliberately brought her down there to make things miserable for him.

"But you do believe him guilty," declared Molly.

"How can yuh say that? Gosh darn it, I never wrote that telegram."

"But you sent out telegrams trying to have him arrested."

"Uh-huh," Bunch scratched his head violently. "Yea-a-ah, I—I had to do it, Mrs. Dean. You don't know what I've got to put up with around here. It's awful, I tell yuh."

"And you think Jack r-r-robbed the Paragon."

"A-a-a-aw, sa-a-ay! What put that in yore head? Here, here! Don't cry. F'r gosh sake! Say, I thought you had quit Jack."

But Molly was crying and did not answer this.

"We better go home, Molly," said Marsh Conlan. "It'll all come out right."

"Yeah, you better go home," nodded the sheriff violently. "If it ain't one thing, it's two."

Marsh Conlan and his daughter went back up the street, while the sheriff swore at the whole world, and Marsh Conlan in particular.

IT WAS about three o'clock that afternoon. Henry Boggs, Goober Gillis, Spook Murphy and Joe White, the latter one of the Diamond F cowboys, were seated on the sidewalk in front of the Paragon talking about Jack Dean.

"Jack shore ganged up quick," said Goober. "He never did strike me as bein' a feller that would go plumb wrong. I never was so surprized in my life."

"Nobody can tell," said Spook wisely. "Eggs look most alike outside."

Henry laughed at the wisdom of the half-breed.

"You sure got it right, Spook. As far as that Greasewood outfit is concerned, they're plumb bad. I've heard a lot of stories about 'em, and mebbe Jack and his gang didn't do so bad in plantin' a couple of 'em."

"That's all right," said Goober, "but it kinda looks to me as though Jack had ganged up with some of that Greasewood tripe. He shore must 'a' had a good reason for high-tailin' it out of this country."

"Well, yeah," agreed Henry. "My theory of it all is this; Jack got—" But the theory was never propounded.

Henry Boggs happened to glance up the street, where three horsemen were coming into town—and one was Jack Dean. The other two were Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens.

"Good —— and little fish-hooks!" cried Henry.

"Jack Dean and two salty-lookin' specimens," corrected Goober slowly. "Right into the hands of the law!"

"Where's Bunch Sherr?" whispered Henry, looking around helplessly.

"Forget it!" snapped Joe White. Henry swallowed thickly and decided to let nature take its course—or something to that effect.

The three men tied their horses at the Paragon hitch-rack. Several men had seen Jack Dean by this time, and were watching to see what might be done about it. Jack Dean led the way from the hitch-rack straight to the Paragon. He grinned at the men on the sidewalk.

"Hyah, Goober," he said. "How's everythin'?"

"Fair—jist fair, Jack." Goober's voice was weak.

"Got a cold, Goober?"

"No-o-o," Goober tried to smile.

"Hello, Hennery." Jack turned to Henry Boggs.

"Purty goo-o-od," drawled Henry. "How's things with you, Jack?"

"All right. How are you, Joe? Hyah, Spook."

"Jus' right," grunted Spook.

Some one had told the sheriff, and he was coming across the street from a store, coming rather swiftly, keeping his eyes on Jack Dean.

"Hyah, Bunch," grinned Jack.

The sheriff reached the edge of the sidewalk and stepped up beside Jack.

"You —— fool!" he exploded. "Why didja come back? Now I've got to arrest yuh for forty different things."

"Forty?" Jack's lips twisted defiantly. "What's the joke, Bunch?"

"No joke, young man. I've got to arrest yuh for the murder of Shorty Pierce."

"Shorty Pierce?" Jack glanced around at the other men. "When did Shorty get killed?"

"And I just got this telegram," said the sheriff, ignoring Jack's question.

He handed the telegram to Jack, who read it and handed it to Hashknife.

"I'll admit the truth of the telegram," said Jack, "but I swear I didn't harm Shorty Pierce. Why, I never knew anythin' happened to Shorty."

"Uh-huh. But jussasame I've got to arrest yuh, Jack. You've got to prove a few things—and I hope yuh can."

"What about that Greasewood mix-up?" queried Jack.

"I dunno," the sheriff shook his head. "I've got first call on yuh. Afterward, I reckon you'll have to face that charge."

Jack turned to Hashknife, who was still holding the telegram.

"What do yuh think of it, pardner?" asked Jack.

"Well," said Hashknife slowly, "I reckon you'll have to be arrested, Jack. But I reckon we've got enough to alibi yuh out of havin' run away from here."

"Were you in Greasewood last night?" asked the sheriff.

Hashknife grinned slowly at the sheriff.

"I ain't never been introduced to you, have I?" he asked pleasantly.

"What the —— has an introduction got to do with it?"

"A —— of a lot, as far as I'm concerned. Pa always told me to never talk to strangers."

Bunch Sherr snorted audibly and stared at the tall, serious-faced cowboy, whose gray eyes twinkled genially. His eyes shifted to Sleepy, who was grinning.

"What the —— is so funny about it?" snapped the sheriff.

"You," said Sleepy. "I'll betcha you never got real mad and looked at yourself in the glass. You sure are funny."

"You think I'm funny, do yuh?" Sherr was getting mad.

"Wait a minute," laughed Jack. "Let me introduce you folks."

The sheriff merely nodded coldly, but the rest of the crowd shook hands warmly. Henry Boggs was enjoying Hashknife and Sleepy.

"Now that we've been introduced, mebbe you'll answer my questions," said the disgruntled sheriff.

"Mebbe," said Hashknife. "Yuh never can tell about us. Any man is liable to be a —— fool at times."

"Meanin' that yuh won't?"

"Meanin' that we don't have to, Sheriff." Hashknife's mood had changed suddenly, and the twinkle had faded from his gray eyes. The sheriff studied him for a few moments, and decided that they very likely would not answer any questions. He turned to Jack.

"I've got to put yuh in jail, Jack."

"That's all right, Bunch."

"I'm sorry that killin' took place in Greasewood. It won't help yore chances here."

"You better find out what that killin' was about before yuh start gettin' sorry," advised Hashknife. "If you've got any sorrow to throw away, put it where it'll do some good."

"Yeah? Well, that might be a good idea, Hartley. Ready, Jack?"

"Sure. Hashknife, will you take my bronc back to the ranch? I reckon we can clear all this up as soon as they give me a hearin'."

"Don't worry about anythin', Jack," assured Hashknife, as he and Sleepy shook hands with the prisoner.

The sheriff wasted no time in getting Jack behind the bars. He wanted to get back and have a talk with Hashknife. In spite of the fact that Hashknife had made him mad, he wanted to find out more about what happened in Greasewood.

Since their escape from Greasewood, Jack Dean had told Hashknife and Sleepy about the Red Triangle gang in the Cherokee country. Later on, at the Bar D ranch-house, he had told Hashknife of his family troubles, blaming no one except himself.

"Too much liquor and cards—and not enough brains," was the way he put it. And Hashknife liked him for his frankness.

"You ought to straighten up and get her back," said Hashknife.

"Lock up the stable after the horse has been stolen, eh?"

"Was she sore at yuh?"

"Nope—just hurt."

"That's worse than gettin' sore, Jack."

So, with a fairly good knowledge of what had been going on in the Cherokee range, Hashknife's curiosity had been aroused. But there was nothing strange about that, according to Sleepy's idea. Anything with a flavor of mystery and danger appealed to Hashknife.

HASHKNIFE HARTLEY, christened Henry, was born on Milk River, Montana, the son of an itinerant preacher. There had been six children in the family, of which Henry was the oldest, and he started out to shift for himself at the tender age of twelve. Having but little education, but a keen mind and a thirst for knowledge, he acquired a practical education and a great understanding of human nature.

A top-hand cowpuncher at sixteen, he worked his way to the south, eventually hiring out to the outfit from which he received his nickname of Hashknife.

By that time he had more than reached man's estate and was accounted as a top-hand cowman. There he met and became the bunkie of Sleepy Stevens, so called because some one had said that no man ever caught him napping; and from the old Hashknife ranch these two, the tall, thin-faced Hashknife and the square-built, grin-faced Sleepy, became wanderers of the rangeland, always wondering what might be found on the other side of the next hill.

Both of them were nearing forty years of age, but their hearts were young, and the other side of the hill called them the same as it had when they started out. Neither of them had amassed any bankroll, nor did they seem to want any. From range to range they wandered, always assuring themselves that some day they might find the ideal spot to settle down and have roses in their front yard.

But fate had marked them for certain things. Life had made fatalists of them, and small wonder. Where local peace officers and range detectives failed, fate sent Hashknife with his uncanny ability to build, piece by piece, evidence that usually ended in powder smoke—and peace. And with him stood the grinning Sleepy, never sure just what it was all about, but backing Hashknife's play, no matter what happened.

IT IS small wonder that Hashknife thrilled at what Jack Dean had told him of the Red Triangle—the three men who had shot down Barney Ellis and then went on a spree of crime. Of course Jack did not know about the killing of Shorty Pierce, nor of the stolen JFT horse herd, but Hashknife soon found it out in the Paragon Saloon.

But Hashknife made no comments. Such a thing would have been ill-advised.

Henry Boggs wanted Hashknife to describe what had happened in Greasewood, but Hashknife declined.

"I better let Jack Dean tell it," he said. "But yuh can bet that none of us shot the sheriff, if that's what yuh want to know."

"Was he shot?"

"Yeah, I think he was."

"Who was these other two whippoorwills?" asked Goober.

"Couple of horse-thieves."

"Must be residents of Greasewood," grinned Henry. "If Oscar had another git-arr, I'd play and sing yuh my song."

"Yeah, and you never paid for the one yuh busted over Friar Tuck's head," complained the bartender.

"Friar Tuck?" smiled Hashknife. "He was a character in 'Robin Hood.'"

"This'n is a character in Cherokee," said Henry. "I never heard of that Hood place, except Hood River, in Oregon."

"This was a different place," said Hashknife seriously.

The sheriff came from jailing Jack Dean, but came in a different mood.

"I don't like to horn in on yuh, Hartley," he said, "but Jack Dean and his father are old friends of mine and I'd like to talk a little with you. Anythin' yuh tell me won't go any farther."

"That's fair enough," agreed Hashknife. "How about yore office?"

"Good!"

Hashknife went to the office with him and they sat down behind a closed door, while Hashknife related how he had met Jack Dean. He told in detail of the things that happened at Greasewood, and the sheriff grinned widely when he visualized Case Newton shooting at the sheriff in the restaurant doorway.

"That makes that end of it look easier for Jack," said the sheriff. "If we can clear him of this charge here, we'll tell Greasewood County to go to ——. I've heard a lot of unfavorable things about that place, but I didn't think the sheriff hob-nobbed with horse-thieves."

"Well," said Hashknife, "accordin' to Shasta Jones, this sheriff was a good friend of Case Newton, and it's a cinch Case Newton is a horse-thief. Some day I'm goin' to go to Greasewood and make Case Newton hard to catch. Henry Smith was the feller that stole my gray horse at Piñon, and Levis was the one who stole them three horses from Jack Dean. But accordin' to that telegram Levis is dead. I'll bet old Jones will chuckle with joy. Him and Levis have been tryin' to kill each other for a year."

"And if they ever got Jack over there again, he'd never live to be tried," declared the sheriff.

"Not a chance. Now, I've told you all about that deal, so I'd like to have you tell me what you know about this Red Triangle proposition, if it's a fair trade."

"Fair enough. Sounds like a —— fairy tale, Hartley."

And so Hashknife got the sheriff's version of things, which was virtually the same as Jack had told him and what he had heard about the stealing of the JFT horses and the killing of Shorty Pierce. The sheriff did not question Hashknife's reasons for wanting to know about the Red Triangle. Those level gray eyes seemed to bore into the sheriff's brain, and he found himself trying very hard to not forget a single detail. When he had finished his story he wondered just why he had taken such pains to tell all this to a stranger.

"Well," said Hashknife thoughtfully, "you folks have had quite a time, haven't yuh? And you ain't got no clue at all?"

"Not a —— thing."

"Would yuh know one, if yuh seen it, Sheriff?"

Bunch Sherr rubbed his chin and considered the question. Finally he shook his head slowly.

"I don't know if I would, Hartley. I'm jist the sheriff. Yuh don't study to be a sheriff. If enough folks vote for yuh, that's all yuh need. Pinnin' a star on a man don't make him any wiser than he was before yuh pinned it on. Of course, it made me kinda smart at first, but now I know I don't see any farther into a blank wall than anybody else. I don't—" he hesitated and looked straight at Hashknife— "Why did yuh ask me if I'd know a clue if I seen one?" he demanded.

"Just wonderin' if yuh would."

"Would you, Hartley?"

"I don't suppose so. Anyway, I'm much obliged to yuh for tellin' me that story." Hashknife got to his feet and picked up his hat.

"It was a fair trade," smiled the sheriff. "You goin' to be around here for a while?"

"Yeah, out at the Bar D. Me and Sleepy and Shasta are goin' to run that place until Jack gets loose."

"That's good. Jack will need yuh as witnesses, I reckon."

Hashknife left the office and went to a general store, where he filled a gunnysack with groceries. Sleepy managed to get away from the boys at the Paragon, and the two rode back to the Bar D.

Shasta Jones had been doing some washing, and met them with a broad grin.

"By golly, this is livin', this is! Gee-ra-neums in pots and carpets on the floor. And every once in a while a hen announces the arrival of a fresh aig. I feel like one of the Jews that Moses led out of Egypt. Where's Jack?"

"Jack's in jail, Shasta. It wasn't no joke about that sheriff havin' a warrant. He's supposed to have robbed and killed a saloon-keeper in Cherokee—which he swears he didn't do. And I seen a telegram from Greasewood sayin' that Levis and Bush were killed and the sheriff wounded."

"Slip'ree ellum!" exploded Shasta. "Whoo-ee! I 'magine Levis went out in that storm of buckshot. I ought to speak softly of the dead, but I can't. And Lee Bush! Well, he wasn't the worst of the outfit, and I wish it had been Hennery Smith, only his name ain't Hennery, and his last name is Grove. I dunno why he told yuh his name was Smith."

"They'll prob'ly arrest all of us and take us back to Greasewood," said Sleepy.

"Not me, by ——! I've got six buckshot shells left, and I'll salivate the first man that suggests such a thing. Anyway, they don't want me back there, because I know too much. Betcha I could send that sheriff to the pen if I told what I know. Gosh, it's too bad about Jack. Mebbe we can bust the pin on that jail an' take him out, eh? I'd like to burgle a jail. Say, I wonder if Jack would care if I used his razor?

"If I remember rightly I ain't such a —— of a bad lookin' feller when I git my whiskers whittled down. Ain't over sixty—much—which is jist a ripenin' age in the Jones fambly. If it wasn't for bein' crippled, the same of which was enacted by a rifle bullet, accentuated, as yuh might say, by rheumatism, I'd be a up-and-comin' young man."

"I don't think Jack would care," laughed Hashknife. "Yuh can use mine, if yuh want to. It's in my war-bag. But yuh ought to use a pair of shears on that hair, ahead of the razor."

"I'll use my knife. Kinda bunch and hack. Ha-ha-ha-ha! Say, it's shore a relief to not have to dodge a knife. Yes-sir, it sure is. I wonder if one of you gents will kindly git me some wud?"

"I'll get yuh some, Shasta," offered Sleepy.

Hashknife went with him to the woodpile, where they split up a lot of old corral poles.

"Well, what do yuh know, Hashknife?" queried Sleepy.

Hashknife shook his head as he gathered up an armful of wood.

"The sheriff's story tallies with Jack's, except for the things Jack didn't know about. It's a cinch the Lazy JN was the outfit that received the stolen horses. I'll have to ask Shasta if he knows anythin' about that masked man, or men, they talked about in that hay-loft. From what I can learn, it sure is a smart organization—except for the fact that they leave their trade-mark. I don't *sabe* that part of it, unless they're tryin' to scare the whole country."

"I reckon they've done that," said Sleepy.

"Completely. It seems that they've pulled their jobs without a bobble, so far. Anyway they've left nothing that the sheriff can work on. He's jumpy."

"So is that deputy. He admits it. Four men dead, and not a clue. By golly, it's enough to scare anybody, Hashknife."

"That's right. We can't do a thing on the killings that have been done, because any evidence has been wiped out a long time ago—but there may be more."

"Yuh think so?"

"Just as sure as two and two make four."

"Huh!" Sleepy drew a deep breath. "Well, that's pleasant. I wonder if they ever pick on strangers."

"If the strangers fool with their machinery, Sleepy."

"Well, let's not do it. This don't mean anythin' to us."

"No-o-o, that's true, Sleepy, it don't mean anythin' to us. But it means a lot to some folks—Jack Dean, for instance. They're killers,. cowboy—dirty, cold-blooded murderers. And nothin' will stop 'em—until they're stopped."

"I suppose not, but I hope they don't find out that we're tryin' to stop 'em."

"Yo're not scared, are yuh, Sleepy?"

"I ain't so scared, Hashknife—not so awful scared—but this is the only shirt I've got, and I don't want no danged red triangles painted on the bosom."

"How about that wud?" yelled Shasta from the kitchen doorway. "I'm makin' a apple pie, and if yuh don't start showin' signs of life, this crust is goin' to ossify."

"Comin' up," laughed Sleepy, and they filed in with huge loads of split poles, which they piled beside the stove.

"That's the most wood I've seen in a year," declared Shasta. "I'll betcha it would take Levis a month to cut and carry in that much."

"Levis is all through packin' fuel," said Sleepy.

"He is like ——!" snorted Shasta. "Unless Saint Peter is sufferin' from astigmatism, that Levis person is jist startin' to bring fuel. Now git out of the kitchen and let a good cook spread a meal."

GOOBER GILLIS carried the news of Jack's arrest to the JFT ranch, and Frank Dean left immediately for town. The fact that Jack had come back to Cherokee seemed in his favor. Goober did not tell him about what Sleepy had told them of the shooting scrape in Greasewood, but he told Tiny, Jew and Flatwheel about it.

He also told them what Sleepy had said about Jack's chasing a horse thief through the mountains to Greasewood, and that Jack brought his horses back with him. Then he told them of Hashknife and Sleepy, and Jew Mulligan immediately sat up.

"Hashknife Hartley? Was that the name, Goober?"

"Yeah, that's the name. He's a tall, skinny jigger."

"I dunno anythin' about his shape, Goober, but I know what he done in the Twisted River country."

"What'd he do?" asked Tiny.

"I got it from Scotty McLeod," said Mulligan. "He was that kinda thin-faced, red-headed feller that worked for the Diamond F for a while last summer. He was mixed up in some killin' stuff up in the Twisted River country, and they sure had the deadwood on him, but along comes a fellow named Hashknife Hartley and cleaned up the whole crooked gang. And Scotty said it read jist like a book. Unless Scotty lied to beat ——, this Hartley is a reg'lar detective and a gun-fighter."

"Well, he looks it," nodded Goober. "Yuh can tell the feller that wears his gun for an ornyment."

"Well, I'll bet it's the same geezer. That shootin' match over in Greasewood was prob'ly legitimate. I wonder if he'll mix in on this Red Triangle business? I wish Scotty was here to tell yuh what he told me. I'm too —— truthful to tell yuh all he said."

"If it was too strong for you to repeat, this here Scotty must 'a' been the prime liar of the world," said Flatwheel Culler. "I've never seen you balk at anythin' before, Jew."

"I may be a —— liar," grinned Mulligan, "but I'm no romancer. Still, Scotty didn't talk like a liar. He wasn't braggin' an' he told it straight enough. Scotty says this feller saved him from a rope, and Scotty sure was grateful."

"I knowed Scotty," said Goober. "When he talks his *r*'s sound like a dead ox-wagon goin' over a corduroy-road."

"Oh, that jigger?" said Tiny. "He's workin' in a livery-stable in Salina—chambermaidin' a lot of buggy-horses."

"It's a good job for him," said Mulligan. "He's a nice feller, but he shore is a misfit in a saddle."

FRANK DEAN found Molly atthe jail talking with Jack and the sheriff. Jack had told her his story, and now he repeated it for the benefit of his father. He showed them the bruise on his head where Grove, alias Henry Smith, had struck him, and the burned places on his wrists where the ropes had been pulled tight.

"Oh, wasn't it wonderful to think that these two men came to that ranch just in time to save him?" marveled Molly.

Frank Dean nodded quickly.

"Yes, Molly, it sure was lucky. But what's worryin' me is this charge here. How can Jack prove he didn't do this? He left the day after Pierce was struck down and robbed."

"But I'm not a member of the Red Triangle," protested Jack. "This was done by them. That ought to be enough alibi."

"It would be, if we knew who the gang was, Jack."

"But the law can't prove anythin', Dad. There's no clue. Why do they say I did it?"

"I suppose I'm as much to blame as anybody, Jack," said the sheriff. "We all know you needed money, and we know that Pierce cut off yore credit. Somebody beat him over the head and took away his money. Once he regained consciousness long enough to mention yore name and the Red Triangle together. You had pulled out of town and nobody knew where yuh went. Now, can yuh blame us for thinkin' that somethin' was wrong?"

"Mentioned my name with the Red Triangle?"

"Yeah, he did, Jack. And it was when I asked him who hit him. He said, 'The Red Triangle,' and then he said, 'Jack Dean.'

"But yuh can discount most of that," added the sheriff. "The doctor says he might say anythin', especially things that were on his mind. If things were like yuh say they were at Greasewood, I reckon there ain't much evidence to hold yuh on. I'll talk with the prosecutin' attorney. Jim Perry is kinda hard-headed, but he won't prosecute unless he's got a good case."

"Well, I've got three men to prove that Greasewood deal."

"Yeah?" The sheriff rubbed his chin. "I had the story from Hartley, and it sounds straight enough, but what do you know about 'em, Jack? Will their evidence be accepted? Who are they?"

"Who are they? I don't know, Bunch. But I do know I'd swear on 'em, the same as I'd swear on a Bible. That's the way they strike me." He turned to his father. "I wish you'd ride out and see 'em, Dad—you and Molly."

"I'd like to," said Molly quickly.

"Might be a good idea," agreed the sheriff. "I'll hitch up my buggy outfit and ride out with yuh. I'm not goin' to answer that Greasewood telegram. I suppose they'll raise ——, if that sheriff dies, but Hartley says there's four of 'em to swear that they seen a horse-thief shoot at the sheriff, and that they'll also swear that Jack had no hand in killin' the other two, which were also horse-thieves."

"Well, I can't swear to that," grinned Jack. "We were all shootin'—we had to. But we saved my three horses. I had 'em corralled at home, all ready to take over to Dick French, and I wasn't goin' to lose 'em without a struggle."

The sheriff left Molly with Jack while he and Frank Dean went to the stable to get the horses and buggy. For a long time neither of the young couple spoke. Then—

"You never came to see me," said Molly sadly.

"Yuh mean—after yuh left the ranch, Molly?"

"Yes."

"Well, I didn't think yuh wanted to see me."

"Maybe I didn't, but—but you didn't care enough to come and see if I did."

"You said you was all through with me, Molly."

"Well, you—you can't blame me, can you?"

"I didn't blame you."

"You didn't care."

"Didn't I? Listen Molly. I've been seventeen kinds of a fool, and I admit it. When you left me I felt like I'd been kicked in the wind by a strong horse. I must have been crazy to drink and gamble like I've been doin'. Yeah, I was crazy. I realized that when I was—when it was too late."

"You spent every cent we had and went in debt."

"Yeah. The only thing that kept me from spendin' more was the fact that I couldn't get it."

"You talk as though you were proud of it."

"No, I'm not proud, Molly. I reckon it just had to be. But I'm proud to think I'm not goin' to do it any more. I had a talk with Hashknife Hartley and I told him about you. He made me tell it all. I dunno how many times he's been married, but it must have been a lot of times, because he sure gave me a lot of advice—good advice, too. And I'm goin' to follow it—if I get a chance."

"You mean—if I come back to you, Jack?"

"Uh-huh. You can handle the money after this. If you want to go to dances or up to a show at Salina, I'll go along. And I won't take whisky to excess, and my gamblin' is limited to penny-ante in bunk-houses."

Molly looked at him in amazement.

"Is that some of Hashknife Hartley's advice?"

"Well, that's some of it, Molly."

Molly's face was a study in emotions. It seemed that she was about to laugh, but the lines changed and tears came to her eyes. The idea of Jack Dean accepting such advice. And he seemed sincere in it, too. Molly brushed away her tears.

"I'll think it over," she said chokingly. "I—I'd like to meet this Hashknife Hartley."

Her father was calling from the front of the office, so she left Jack, watching her from between the bars, and went out to the buggy.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy finished their meal and shoved back from the table, loosening their belt-buckles. Shasta Jones grinned widely and waved the coffee-pot at them, but they threw up their hands.

"No more," groaned Hashknife. "I don't reckon I'll ever need food again. Shasta, yo're the king of all cooks."

"I am pretty good, ain't I? Wish Jack was here to eat the rest of that apple-pie. This here wud is better for cookin' than the stuff yuh git in Greasewood. This kinda holds an even fire. I tell there's a lot in the kinda wud yuh use."

"It never had much to do with my cookin'," grinned Sleepy.

"Mebbe not. What time is it, Hashknife?"

Hashknife drew out his watch.

"Four o'clock."

"Uh-huh," Shasta squinted at an old clock on the kitchen shelf. It was an old box-like affair, with a hand-painted glass face which had faded badly. One of the hands had been broken off about midway. To all appearances it was merely a family heirloom.

"I wonder if that derned thing'll keep time?" said Shasta. "I lost my watch in a poker-game over a year ago, and I like to know what time I'm cookin' a meal."

"It don't look practical," sighed Hashknife, so filled with food that he had hardly ambition enough left to roll a smoke.

Shasta lifted the old clock off the shelf and gave it a shake. It rattled as if its works had all been torn loose.

"Yeah, that'll run," grinned Sleepy.

Shasta turned it face down on the table

and opened the back. He scowled into it for a moment, lifted his eyes and looked from Hashknife to Sleepy.

"Busted?" asked Sleepy.

"Busted, ——!" snorted Shasta. "Look!"

He turned the clock upside down and a handful of gold coins tumbled out on the table, followed by a bundle of currency.

"Don't look like it was busted, does it?" he asked.

Hashknife looked at the money thoughtfully.

"The cache of the Bar D," he said slowly. "You better put it back, Shasta. I wouldn't touch it, if I was you, Sleepy."

But Sleepy was unfolding the bills, spreading them out on the table. Among them was a piece of paper, evidently torn from a small note-book, and on it was penciled—

I. O. U. $15—Henry Clay Boggs.

"That's the deputy sheriff," said Hashknife.

"What about the deputy sheriff?" said a voice, and they turned to see the sheriff standing at the kitchen door, and behind him was Frank Dean and Molly.

The three men got to their feet quickly.

"Hello, Sheriff," said Hashknife.

But the sheriff was looking past him at the money on the table beside the open clock. He came inside and the others followed him. Then the sheriff introduced Molly and Frank Dean to Hashknife and Sleepy, who in turn introduced Shasta Jones.

Molly had seen the money and the old clock. Her eyes shifted to the vacant shelf and back to Hashknife, as if seeking an explanation.

"Shasta was tryin' to make it run," he said simply.

"But it won't run," she said. "It hasn't any works."

For several moments there was an embarrassing silence. Then—

"I'm sorry Shasta monkeyed with the thing, ma'am," said Hashknife.

"Oh, that was all right, Mr. Hartley."

"Thank yuh. He just wanted to have somethin' to tell him the time."

Hashknife backed to the table and picked up the clock in one hand, calling their attention to the empty case, while at the same time his other hand covered the I. O. U. And when he put the clock back on the shelf, the I. O. U. paper was in his pocket.

"You better put that money in yore pocket, Sleepy," he said indifferently, and to the visitors:

"Sleepy is our banker, folks. Once in a while we has to have an accounting. By lettin' him pack the money, we're sure of not goin' broke, 'cause Sleepy is shore practical."

Frank Dean laughed.

"That's quite an idea."

"Yeah, it sure is. Well, I'm glad you folks came out. How's Jack feelin'?"

"As good as you could expect," said the sheriff. "Haven't heard anythin' more from Greasewood."

"About that Greasewood deal," said Shasta evenly, "if they want to start any trouble over that killin', you tell 'em Shasta Jones will come back and testify. If that don't shut 'em up tight, they're not as smart as I think they are."

"But suppose they get out a warrant for Jack? He seems to be considered the guilty one."

"Thasall right. Buck Shreve is the deputy, an' he'll be the one to serve the warrant. Just tell him I want to see him before he makes the arrest, an' I'll betcha yuh can't see him for dust. Or mebbe it might be better, if he shows up, to kinda stall him along until yuh can send word to me. I'll make him eat his warwant—an' he'll be glad to do it."

The sheriff did not question them further about their remark concerning the deputy sheriff of Cherokee. It is possible that he forgot it. They all went into the living-room, except Shasta Jones, who busied himself with cleaning up the kitchen. Frank Dean was anxious to hear what Hashknife could tell him about finding Jack at the Lazy JN, and of what happened in Greasewood.

"What would have happened to Jack if you boys hadn't come along?" asked Molly.

"That's hard to tell, ma'am," said Hashknife. "They was kinda debatin' his future when the dance started. Oh, they wasn't so very smart. But one of 'em really did shoot the sheriff. When the sheriff tried to arrest Jack, we thought it was merely to hold us in Greasewood, so I dumped him on the restaurant floor and took his gun away.

"He must 'a' had two guns, or borrowed one, 'cause he came to the doorway and took a shot at us just as the Lazy JN outfit rides in, tryin' to head us off and the bullet drops one of their horses. I reckon the boss of the Lazy JN got an idea that it was one of us in that doorway, so he downs the sheriff. Of course they'd have to blame us for it."

"Do you think that the Red Triangle outfit is from over there?" asked the sheriff.

Hashknife smiled slowly.

"Yuh see, I don't know enough about things around here to even make a guess, Sheriff. But they're mean enough to be, if that means anythin' to yuh."

"Where are you boys from?" asked the sheriff.

"From?" Hashknife smiled. "Any place, Sheriff."

"I merely asked, in case you appear for Jack."

"Does a witness have to be from somewhere?"

"Well, the court would kinda like to know who yuh are."

"I wouldn't worry about it, if I was you."

"Oh, I'm not worryin', Hartley."

"That's the stuff. Worry never gets yuh anythin'."

"Well, I want to thank you for the things you did for Jack," said Molly, holding out her hand to Hashknife, as they got to their feet.

"We didn't do much," said Hashknife. "It just happened."

The rest of them filed out through the kitchen, leaving Molly and Hashknife together.

"And I want to thank you for the advice you gave Jack," whispered Molly.

"Advice?"

"Yes, about not drinking and gambling and all that."

"Oh, yea-a-ah. Well, I hope he takes it seriously."

"I think he has. It's the first advice he ever took from anybody. I—we—we were wondering—" Molly hesitated.

"Wonderin' what, Mrs. Dean?"

"You had such good advice that—that —you've been married, haven't you, Mr. Hartley?"

"No-o-o-o," Hashknife blushed. "I came near it once, ma'am. I asked a girl to marry me—and she said no."

"Oh!" Molly laughed and went out through the kitchen, with Hashknife following her, grinning widely. He shook hands with Dean and the sheriff, and they drove away.

"Didja ever see a prettier girl?" asked Sleepy. "And to think that —— fool of a Jack ever went huntin' stolen horses. If she was my wife, they could have every —— horse that ever was foaled."

"She's pretty," admitted Hashknife, as they went back into the kitchen, where Shasta was finishing his work.

"How much money was in the clock, Sleepy?"

They counted it and found it to be exactly five hundred dollars, besides the fifteen dollar I. O. U.

"Now the question is—who owns it?" said Hashknife. "Mrs. Dean didn't know it was there, that's a cinch. Jack's broke. That is, he hasn't any money—so he says."

"What'll we do—split it?" asked Shasta.

"Split nothin'. It don't belong to us, Shasta. We'll cache it in a new place."

"That's the stuff," agreed Sleepy. "By golly, I didn't know just why you was lyin' to the folks, Hashknife, but I kinda get an idea now."

"I had to, Sleepy. If the sheriff knew that we found all that money in the clock, Jack would have a sweet time in explain' where it came from. Mebbe he knows, but I don't think he does. Jack's no —— fool."

"You think it was planted on him?" asked Shasta.

"Who knows? If Jack was sucker enough to knock over that gambler and then hide half of the money in that old clock, he ought to go to the pen for life, and if the sheriff knew where that money came from Jack would be a goner—unless he can prove where he got it."

"And with a wife like her," drawled Sleepy. "Some folks never know when they're well off."

"Same old heart complaint, eh?" grinned Hashknife. "Show you a pretty girl and nothin' else matters. It's a wonder you ain't married."

"No it ain't. You chase me away from every prospect I get."

"Be glad he does," said Shasta. "I've been married—twice. The first time was ten year ago. I've jist struck it rich in the Mojave, an' I pilgrims into San Berdoo with about ten thousand, which was what I got for my claim. Feelin' the call of matrimony, I kinda looks around. I've got plenty of money for the venture, an' after a few days I chooses a girl who is singin' in a refined sort of a grog-shop.

"She didn't know my name until I wrote it on the license, which was somethin' I liked about her. Names didn't mean anythin' to her. She wanted a home, she did. And she had one all picked out. It was worth fifteen thousand—an' I only had about nine left. She told me that the owner was a friend of hers, an' she could hoodle him into sellin' it a lot cheaper, if I'd let her take the cash money an' make the try.

"I did. Eve-a-lynn is goin' yet, I reckon. The next one was a Swedish girl in Sacramento. Somehow she mistook a statement that I made. I said I had sold a mine in the Mojave for ten thousand cash, an' she thought I still had it. That's the way with them furriners—they're kinda thick. She hit me with a chunk of concrete pavement, and when I woke up in the hospital—Frieda was gone.

"An' that's the way it goes. If yuh got money they beat yuh out of it and leave yuh flat; and if yuh ain't got none they knock yuh down and leave yuh flat. So you can be glad that Hashknife chases yuh away from bein' foolish."

"You didn't get shot through matrimony, didja?" laughed Sleepy.

"No-o-o, I got that honestly. A sheriff mistook me for a horse-thief."

HASHKNIFE went to Cherokee the next morning, leaving Sleepy and Shasta in charge of the ranch. He wanted to purchase some clothes and to have a private talk with Jack Dean. But the sheriff was just a little suspicious of a private talk, and didn't mind saying so.

But he finally agreed, and let Hashknife talk to Jack in the cell while he sat in the office, just out of earshot. Hashknife questioned Jack about finances. Jack said he didn't have a dollar in money.

"How about that old clock in yore kitchen?" asked Hashknife.

"How about what?"

"That old clock in yore kitchen."

Jack grinned.

"I don't know what yo're talkin' about. What has that old clock to do with us?"

"We examined it yesterday, Jack."

"Didja? It won't run; there's no wheels in it."

It was evident to Hashknife that Jack was ignorant of what had been found in the clock, so he told Jack.

"Five hundred dollars! Yo're crazy!"

"Must be all three of us crazy. The question is, who put it in the clock?"

"Good gosh, I don't know! Molly—"

"Nope. She saw the clock on the table along with the money. If she had put the money in there, her face would have showed it."

"Sure. Anyway, she never had that much money, Hashknife. What did you do with it?"

"We hid it. Now keep still about it. Don't say a word to anybody."

Jack promised, and Hashknife went back to the sheriff. Bunch told him there was no further word for Greasewood and with that Hashknife left.

Goober Gillis and Jew Mulligan happened to be in town, and Hashknife met them at the Paragon. Goober hastened to introduce his companion to Hashknife, and Jew asked Hashknife if he had ever been in Arapaho City.

"Up in the Twisted River country? Yeah, I've been there."

"Remember a feller named Scotty McLeod?"

"Yeah, I remember Scotty. Do you know him?"

"Sure. He worked for the Diamond F last summer. Somebody said he's workin' in a livery-stable in Salina now."

"Yeah? Scotty's quite a lad."

Mulligan grinned and invited them to drink with him.

"Scotty told me quite a few things about you," offered Mulligan as they leaned against the Paragon bar. "You had quite a run-in with some horse-thieves up there, didn't yuh?"

"Oh, it didn't amount to much. Scotty probably exaggerated."

"He said you saved his life."

"Thasso? Well, here's a go, gents."

A few minutes later Henry Clay Boggs invaded the saloon and joined the party.

"I'm jailer now," he grinned. "Packin' grub to Jack Dean."

"Do you think he's guilty?" asked Mulligan.

"——, no!" snorted Henry. "They can't hold him. Betcha he goes clear as soon as he has a hearin'. No evidence."

"Were you here the night Pierce was knocked out?" asked Hashknife.

"I sure was," nodded Henry.

"Do any gamblin'?"

"Yea-a-ah, I played a little, I think."

"Got stuck for fifteen dollars and gave Pierce yore I. O. U., didn't yuh?"

"Well, for ——'s sake!" exploded Henry. "How did you know that?"

"Mind-readin'."

"Well, I'll be darned! I didn't know anybody knew of it. I wrote it on a leaf from my note-book an' gave it to him, an' I was right there at the end of the bar. I—I—" Henry grinned foolishly—"I was jist a-figurin' that I was in fifteen dollars."

"Mind-readin', eh?" Jew Mulligan nodded slowly. "Yeah, I reckon Scotty said yuh could."

"Aw, how in —— could he read my mind?" demanded Henry. "Gosh, I wasn't even thinkin' of that fifteen dollars!"

"Yuh don't have to," explained Mulligan. "I'll leave it to Hartley if yuh do. It's jist there. I'll betcha, if he wanted to, he could go around readin' minds an' find out who the Red Triangle gang are."

That was a weighty statement, but Hashknife did not smile.

"Could yuh?" asked Goober anxiously.

"Well, I could try," said Hashknife.

"My gosh!" exploded Oscar the bartender. "It must be a gift.'

"Well, I dunno," said Henry dubiously. "If it ain't mind-readin', I dunno what it is. I thought that me and Shorty Pierce was the only ones that knowed of that I. O. U. I called a bet in the draw poker game, and didn't have chips enough to cover it, so Shorty threw 'em in. He knowed I was good for it, but after I drawed out I wrote that I. O. U. an' slipped it to him."

The boys looked upon Hashknife with growing respect.

"You ain't sleight-of-hand, are yuh?" asked Goober.

"Not so very slight," said Hashknife, laughing internally.

"What am I thinkin' about?" asked Oscar. Hashknife looked keenly at him.

"Yo're thinkin' it's about time for one of us to buy a drink."

"That's it!" Oscar struck his fist on the bar. "Who?"

"Henry Boggs."

"By ——, yo're a wizard."

"All right," laughed Henry. "I'll buy. Name it, gents."

As they were drinking Chuck Liggett, the man in charge of the Paragon, walked past the bar and went to the doorway. He was there a few moments, then he stepped back toward the bar.

"Something has gone wrong, boys. Better see what it is."

The men left the bar and came to

the doorway. Across the street quite a crowd was gathering around the front of a store, where two men were holding saddled horses. The sheriff was already there.

The boys left the Paragon and hurried across. They managed to shove their way to a point of vantage. A man was lying on the sidewalk, evidently badly injured, but conscious. His right shoulder seemed out of commission, and there was blood on his head and face.

It suddenly struck Hashknife that the man's face was familiar. Just at that moment Jew Mulligan spoke his name—

"Scotty McLeod!"

The wounded man looked up at Mulligan, trying to smile a greeting. Some of the men moved aside to give the doctor a chance to examine the man.

"In the shoulder," said Soctty weakly.

"Not in the head?" asked the doctor, noting all the blood.

"No," Scotty shook his head. "That was fr-rom r-r-rocks."

Hashknife smiled. It was the unmistakable burr of Scotty McLeod.

"Better take him where I can work on him," suggested the doctor. "Get a blanket, one of you men."

"Hello, Scotty," said Hashknife softly.

The wounded man turned his head and stared at Hashknife, blinking his eyes rapidly.

"Har-rtley!" he gasped. "Or ar-re ye a ghost of him?"

"It's me all right, Scotty, old-timer."

"Always where there's tr-r-rouble," said Scotty weakly. "Man, I'm glad to see ye. When the saw-bones get me sewed up ag'in, I want to see ye."

The men lifted him on a blanket and carried him away to the doctor's office. The sheriff questioned Joe White and Sid Roach, two of the Diamond F cowboys, who had brought Scotty McLeod to town.

"We found him out about five miles," said Joe. "He was layin' right in the middle of the road—right in one of them rocky places. There wasn't no sign of a horse, nor there wasn't a man track in the dust. Gosh, he must 'a' fell hard on his head.

"We was goin' to the JFT, but came back with him. He was unconscious until we almost got to town. Mebbe we shook him up kinda hard. My bronc never packed double before."

The sheriff hurried away to the doctor's office seeking more information.

"Scotty knew yuh, Hartley," said Mulligan.

"Uh-huh. I'd like to know what happened to him. Mebbe the sheriff will find out."

And the sheriff did. He came running back and they met him.

"Get yore horses," he said. "Scotty was drivin' the stage from Salina."

"——, there's no stage between here and where we found him!" said Joe White.

"Mebbe it went back. Anyway, there's no driver on it and there's money in the express-box."

THE men mounted at the hitch-rack and waited for the sheriff and deputy to saddle their horses. Hashknife rode beside the sheriff, with Joe White leading the procession, and they did not draw rein until they reached the spot where Scotty had been found.

Then they came back toward town, watching the road carefully. It was Hashknife who found where the stage had left the road, swinging to the left, about a hundred yards from where Scotty had been found.

The team had swerved sharply over a sharp hard-packed slope and down through a tangle of waist-high brush, leaving a path that was easy to follow. Farther along a small cottonwood had been broken down, evidence that the team had been running away instead of being driven.

About half a mile from the road they found the overturned stage wedged among some boulders in a dry-wash. One horse was dead; the other was calmly grazing a short distance way, still wearing some of the harness. The dead horse had been badly cut from brush and sharp rocks.

"Look at that, will yuh!" yelled Mulligan, pointing at the side of the stage. "There's that —— mark ag'in!"

They dismounted and examined the wreck. Hashknife looked closely at the triangle, the lines about the width of a man's thumb, the height being about ten inches from apex to base.

"Horse blood," said Goober.

The sheriff was busily searching the wreck, but could not find the small iron express-box.

"You didn't expect to find it, didja?" asked Henry Boggs, twisting his thin neck nervously. The sheriff shook his head. Joe Woods caught the uninjured horse and removed the harness, first putting a rope on the animal.

The sheriff sat down on a rock and considered the wreck.

"Another Red Triangle job," said Goober.

"And McLeod don't know anythin'," said the sheriff sadly.

Henry leaned against a wheel and looked at Hashknife.

"Why don'tcha read a few minds?" he asked seriously.

"What's the use," smiled Hashknife. "None of us know who did it."

"What about readin' minds?" asked the sheriff.

"Hartley can," said Mulligan quickly. "He proved it."

"Yeah, I s'pose."

The sheriff didn't believe a word of it, and was in no mood to argue the question.

"You say McLeod don't know what happened?" asked Hashknife.

"No. The reg'lar driver quit, and they got McLeod to drive. He works at the livery-stable. Said he was drivin' along, when somethin' hit him in the shoulder. Then he heard the report of a gun. He says he ain't sure what happened, but he knows he went kinda dizzy an' tried to get off the seat—prob'ly fell off on his head. The doctor says he'll get well. The team ran away, and they had to foller it to get the money."

"How much money?" asked Hashknife.

"Scotty ain't sure, but he knows there was a package of paper money for the Cherokee bank. Well, we can't do anythin' around here, so we might as well go back to town."

They rode back, leading the one stage horse, and met old John Elder, owner of the stage-line, the main stage office of which was in Cherokee. The old man knew about much of what had occurred as well as they did and leaned on his cane while the sheriff explained about the wrecked stage and dead horse.

"As long as the driver will get well, that's all that matters," he said.

MARSH CONLAN did not know how much money might have been on the stage and would have to wait for advice on the matter.

Hashknife left town a short time after they got back, carrying some new shirts and socks. On the way he met Friar Tuck, whose serious face caused Hashknife to wonder who he might be. Perhaps Friar wondered the same about Hashknife. At any rate Friar absorbed the news as soon as he got to town.

"That's another one for yuh to think about, Friar," said the sheriff gloomily.

But Friar had little to say. He was getting shorter of speech each day. He went to the Paragon, where he found most of the men who had been at the wreck. An argument had been started over Hashknife's ability to read minds, and Joe White was on the negative end of the debate.

"Nobody can do that," he declared. "It can't be done."

"But he done it!" wailed Mulligan. "Ask Henry."

"No argument," said Henry. "Ask Oscar."

Oscar stopped mopping the bar-top long enough to acquiesce.

"What's the argument?" asked Friar.

"Oh, about Hashknife Hartley," said Mulligan. "Mebbe you ain't met him, Friar. He's a tall puncher that's runnin' the Bar D ranch while Jack's in jail.

He's a mind-reader."

"Yeah?" Friar smiled. "A mind-reader?"

"Don't let 'em fool yuh, Friar," warned Joe.

"Fool ——!" snorted Henry. "He reads 'em, I tell yuh. Who in —— knew anythin' about that I. O. U. I gave Shorty Pierce? Nobody. And this long jigger tells me all about it."

"Yeah, and he read my mind, too," crowed Oscar. "How'd he know I was thinkin' somebody ought to buy a drink? And he told me who I was thinkin' ought to buy it."

"I think I met him when I was comin' in," said Friar. "He was ridin' a tall gray bronc."

"That's the feller," declared Mulligan. "If yuh want to hear more about him, talk to Scotty McLeod as soon as he's able to talk. Do you believe in mind-readin', Friar?"

"I never thought much about it," confessed Friar. "It would be a wonderful gift. I wish I could do it."

"Mebbe he can show yuh how."

Friar shook his head slowly.

"No, I don't think so. It ain't anythin' yuh can teach. This Hartley was one of the gang that was with Jack Dean in Greasewood, wasn't he?"

"Sure he was," said Mulligan. "Him and his pardner and an old jigger named Jones. They're a salty outfit, too. Hartley is a plumb smart gun-man, so they say. Scotty says he's the best range detective that ever wore a spur. Scotty knowed him in the Twisted River country, where he shot up a bunch of thieves and bad-men."

"Mebbe he'll clean up the Red Triangle," said Henry.

"If he can read minds," said Friar. "I hope he can."

The cowboys had a few more drinks and drifted out. Friar met Marsh Conlan on the street and stopped to talk things over with him. The talk was of the recent robbery.

"How much did they get?" asked Friar.

"I won't know until I hear more about it. The bank won't lose. It's Wells Fargo express until delivered to me. Do you know McLeod, the driver?"

"Not very well. He was with the Diamond F last summer. How did he happen to be drivin'?"

"The regular driver quit, it seems."

"Well, McLeod had a disastrous start, it seems. How does Jack Dean's chances look to you, Marsh?"

"Oh, I don't think they can hold him very long—not a bit of evidence, Friar."

"That's fine. The sheriff went off half-cocked, I think. It must have been quite a smoke-party they had at Greasewood."

"Must have been. Lucky to get out of it. I guess Hartley and the other two men can clear Jack of anything that might develop over the shooting of the sheriff. It seems that the two men who were killed were horse-thieves belonging to the Lazy JN outfit. One of them stole three horses from Jack, and he was after them. That's where he was all the time."

"I see," smiled Friar. "Well, I'm glad you don't lose anything on this deal today. I think I'll ride out and take a look at that wreck, Marsh. You never can tell what a man might find when he's lookin' for it real hard."

"Still on their trail, eh?"

Friar squinted thoughtfully.

"I'm never off it, Marsh. And I'll stick on it, too. So-long."

THE only thing that happened in the next few days was the hearing of Jack Dean, and his release from custody. It was not exactly exoneration for Jack, but lack of sufficient evidence. None of the Greasewood authorities were at the hearing, and the sheriff had received no further communication from them, so Jack was free to do as he wished. Jack wanted to take Molly back to the Bar D and Molly was willing to go, but Hashknife asked her to stay in town. Her father was curious about this, but Hashknife merely told him that Cherokee was the safe place for a woman, and let it go at that.

One day Sleepy helped Jack take six head of horses to the Diamond F ranch, and Jack went straight to Cherokee and gave the proceeds of the sale to Molly. Then he borrowed the price of a few packs of tobacco from her and rode home satisfied.

"I'm cured," he told Sleepy, and Sleepy admitted that he ought to be.

That night Hashknife got a large square of cardboard, and had Jack pencil a map of the Cherokee country on it. The map was not drawn to scale, but it gave Hashknife a good idea of the layout of the country. Jack marked the approximate spots where Barney Ellis, John Wolf and Ike Wier had been killed, the locations of the different ranch-houses, roads and streams. He drew in Cherry Valley, showing its proximity to the trail which led through the mountains to the Greasewood side.

Having been born and raised in the Cherokee country, Jack was able to tell Hashknife much of its history. He spoke of the old time friendship that had existed between his father, Shorty Pierce and Marsh Conlan. They had come to Cherokee about the same time—when Cherokee was little more than a trading post.

"They were always strong for law and order," said Jack. "Shorty Pierce was as square as a die, even if he did run a gambling house and saloon. Pierce was soft-spoken, kindly—but don't forget that he could shoot, and shoot quick. Dad is a good man with a six-gun and I've seen Marsh Conlan start a tin can rollin' down hill and hit it five times out of six. They had to shoot fast and straight to live here twenty years ago."

"They'll probably miss Pierce," said Hashknife.

"Miss him? You betcha. They won't say anythin', Hashknife, but yuh can see the hurt in their eyes. Anyway, I can because I know 'em so well. The old-timers don't shed tears. They just kinda look off across the hills—you know what I mean—toward the West. Mebbe they think he's gone that way."

"This Red Triangle must worry 'em," said Hashknife.

"Yeah, you bet. The three of 'em talked together about it lots of times, Hashknife. They never said much, except to each other. It kinda struck me that they didn't trust anybody else."

"Yuh can't blame 'em, can yuh?" asked Sleepy.

"I wouldn't trust anybody—but me," declared Shasta. "Do you know what I'd do if I was a young feller?"

"What would you do?" asked Sleepy.

"I'd git to —— out of here. It's jist like trompin' over a mine-dump where some danged fool has scattered a box of dynamite caps. Them —— murderers settin' back there in the hills sayin', 'Eeny, meeny, minie, mo!' How in —— does anybody know who's goin' to be 'mo'?"

"The unlucky one," grinned Hashknife. "Let's go to bed."

"But the unlucky one don't know."

"He'll soon find it out, Shasta."

"Yeah, I s'pose. I'm old and crippled, but by gosh I'm goin' to see that all the doors are locked tight, y'betcha. I thought Greasewood was tough, but we didn't lock the doors."

"Why should yuh?" laughed Sleepy. "You was livin' with the toughest bunch of 'em all."

SHASTA JONES was the first one up the next morning, and he could be heard rattling stove-lids, cursing the wood and banging pans as he prepared breakfast. Then he was silent for several moments. Suddenly—

"The-e-e —— yuh say!" he exploded, and he came clumping out of the kitchen, swearing breathlessly. He kicked open the bedroom door. Sleepy and Hashknife were sitting up in bed, wondering what was the matter with Shasta.

He stopped in the doorway, waving a sheet of paper at them.

"Look at it!" he roared. "Look what the —— fools left for us!"

"Well, hold it still, you —— hummin'-bird!" yelped Sleepy. "What's eatin' yuh, Shasta?"

Shasta recovered sufficiently to let them look at the paper. It was a leaf torn from a cheap tablet, and on it was drawn a crude triangle in red, and below it the penciled words—

giT oUt An STay.

"It was shoved under the kitchen door," said Shasta.

"Earth paint," said Hashknife, examining the triangle. "Red ochre. Must 'a' run out of blood."

"That's a lot of satisfaction to me," wailed Shasta. "They put it under my kitchen door, —— 'em!"

Hashknife got out of bed, yanked on his overalls and boots and headed out through the kitchen. He did not need to look in the stable to know what had happened. The padlock had been forced open and there was only one horse in the stable—the old roan horse which Hashknife had bought at Piñon. Hashknife's gray, Sleepy's sorrel and Jack's brown mare were not in their stalls.

Sleepy, Jack and Shasta were coming toward the stable when Hashknife came out. Jack had been awakened by the commotion.

"Horses all right?" asked Jack anxiously.

"Horse-thieves don't usually hurt 'em much," said Hashknife. "They're gone, if that's what yuh mean."

Jack ran to the stable and looked in, but Sleepy was willing to take Hashknife's word for it.

"All gone except the old roan," said Hashknife. It was so exasperating that he grinned at Sleepy.

"It's sure funny," said Sleepy seriously. "Might as well grin."

"Might as well," said Shasta. "I'll git breakfast. You'll prob'ly git scrambled eggs, because I'm too —— nervous to serve 'em any other way."

Jack came back from the stable and sat down on the porch with them.

"I'm sure sorry about yore horses," he said. "It's too bad we didn't sleep in the stable. After breakfast I'll take that old roan and run in some broncs. We may have to teach 'em a few things, but they're better than walkin'. Do yuh think we better go back to Greasewood and try to find 'em?"

"And get bushed on the trail?" Hashknife shook his head. "Not for me, pardner—at least not just yet."

"Might be better to wait," agreed Jack. "What do yuh think of that warnin', Hashknife?"

"Well, I don't think very kindly of it. It looks to me as though they didn't want us around here."

Shasta Jones had loaded his sawed-off shotgun and had it lying across the kitchen table while he hobbled about the stove.

"If they want me, they'll have to come and git me," he declared grimly. "And I'm hard for to git."

AFTER breakfast Jack rode away on the old roan to round up some riding stock. It was about ten o'clock that morning when the sheriff and deputy rode into the ranch. Hashknife showed them the paper and told of the stolen horses.

"It sure beats ——," declared the sheriff wearily. "Instead of gettin' better it gets worse all the time. But a funny thing has happened, Hartley. This mornin' old John Elder, who owns the stage-line, found a sealed package on his front porch, addressed to the Cherokee bank. Marsh Conlan opened it and found two thousand dollars in currency. It was the money that was stolen from the stage—but how in —— it got on old John's porch is more than we can figure out."

"Well, that's a queer proposition," said Hashknife.

"Ain't it? Nobody can figure out how it got there."

"Mm-m-m-m," Hashknife slowly rolled a cigaret, his eyes half closed. "I never did hear of anythin' like that."

"It wasn't even opened," said Henry Boggs. "Can yuh imagine anybody givin' back that much money without even openin' it?"

"Mebbe they lost it," suggested Sleepy.

"That's my theory," said the sheriff. "But old John says he ain't had no visitors. Why do yuh reckon this Red Triangle outfit are handin' you boys a warnin'?"

"Scared of us, mebbe," smiled Hashknife. "Any more news from Greasewood?"

"Nope."

Sleepy stood up and was staring toward the north. A rider was coming toward the house leading three horses. It was not Jack Dean—and one of the horses was Ghost.

"That's Friar Tuck," said the sheriff.

"And he's got our horses!" cried Sleepy. "Whatcha know about that?"

Friar was riding a chunky bay gelding, sitting his horse like a statue.

"Where in —— didja git them horses?" asked Henry as Friar drew up near them.

"Found 'em in one of my corrals this mornin'. Belong here, don't they?"

"They sure do," nodded Hashknife. "Somebody stole 'em last night."

"Did, eh? I recognized Jack Dean's horse, and I think you was ridin' that tall gray when I met yuh outside of town. Well, they were in my corral, so I brought 'em back. Whoever put 'em in there shut and fastened the gate behind 'em."

Friar dismounted and handed the ropes to Hashknife. The sheriff introduced Friar to Hashknife and Sleepy.

"There's a lot of queer things happenin' around here, Friar," said Henry. "The men that robbed the Salina stage either lost the money on Old Man Elder's porch or put it there on purpose."

"How much was it, Henry?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"The —— it was! Must have lost it. I can't imagine anybody givin' back that much money."

"Same here," growled the sheriff. "Show Tuck that warnin' yuh found on the door this mornin', Hartley."

Friar Tuck examined the paper closely, rubbing his thumb across the red triangle, smearing it slightly.

"Injun color," he said shortly, and handed it back to Hashknife.

"But why did they put the horses in yore corral?" asked Sleepy.

Friar shut his jaw tightly. There was but one explanation.

"Tryin' to put the deadwood on me, I reckon," he said.

"Thinkin' that you'd be fool enough to put 'em in yore corral, even if yuh did steal 'em?" queried Hashknife. "It looks to me as though the Red Triangle wasn't so —— smart after all."

"Sometimes," said Friar slowly, "men don't stop to figure out the consistency of a thing, especially when they've had their horses stolen."

"Meanin' that they'd shoot first and ask questions afterward, Tuck?"

"It has been done, Hartley."

Jack was riding in, herding several loose horses, but when he saw the three stolen horses he let the others go and rode over to the house. Friar Tuck told him where the horses had been left.

"Tryin' to hang it on to you, eh?" grinned Jack. "They'll get you yet, Friar. Didja see the warnin' we got?"

Friar nodded.

"Yeah, I saw it. They haven't warned me yet, Jack."

"Mebbe they won't," said Henry.

"Mebbe not," coldly.

"What I don't understand is why warn us?" said Hashknife. "We're strangers here. Of what interest would we be to the Red Triangle gang? Why want to run us out of the country?"

"They're scared of yuh," said Henry, grinning.

"But why be scared of us? We're peaceable folks. We've done nothin' to antagonize the Red Triangle."

"How about that Greasewood deal?" queried Henry. "Mebbe yuh stepped on their toes over there, Hashknife."

"Yeah, that's possible. But we took only what belonged to us, and as far as the shootin' was concerned, we shot in self-defense. If they monkey with us again, they'll meet the same kind of treatment."

"Still I think they're scared of yuh," contended Henry.

"Well, they don't need to be—or didn't need to be. Now it's different, boys. Any old time a dirty murderin' layout pins a warnin' to my door, they better make good."

"You mean—yo're goin' to help clean up on 'em?" asked Henry.

Hashknife smiled thinly.

"I mean I'm not goin' to miss any chance to hang 'em on the end of a rope, Henry."

Hashknife turned to Friar Tuck and held out his hand.

"Tuck, I've heard yore story. They tell me you've rode the trail of the Red Triangle ever since they made their first killin'."

Tuck nodded grimly, his hand still gripping the hand of Hashknife.

"All right, pardner," said Hashknife. "From now on there's two more of us on that trail."

Friar Tuck released Hashknife's hand and straightened in his saddle. Every drop of his Cherokee blood showed in his face, making him more Indian than white now, this thirty-year-old man who looked fifty, the last of the Fighting Tucks.

"Good!" he said flatly. "We'll get 'em."

Then he whirled his horse around and rode straight back the way he came, never looking back at the five men who watched him ride away.

"Yeah, and they'll get him first," said the sheriff.

"Meanin' that they'll get us too, eh?" asked Hashknife.

"I don't like to hang any crape," said the sheriff, "but they've got all the best of yuh, Hartley. They know who you are—and you don't know them."

"That is an advantage," smiled Hashknife.

Hashknife wanted to find out more about that stolen money which had been returned, so he and Sleepy and Jack saddled their horses and rode back to Cherokee with the sheriff and deputy, leaving Shasta Jones in charge of the ranch.

Shasta was not a fast worker, and he never got far away from the sawed-off shotgun. He firmly believed in preparedness. The Red Triangle was not going to get the drop on Shasta Jones, if he could prevent it.

He was just starting to sweep the living-room, and happened to think it might be a good idea to open the doors. But, being doubly filled with caution, he first glanced through a window. One glance was sufficient. He dropped his broom, limped over to a table, picked up his shotgun and squatted behind the table, partly hidden by a Navajo blanket which was used as a table covering.

Came two sharp clicks when Shasta cocked both hammers, and then the sound of cautious footsteps on the front porch. After a few moments some one knocked softly on the door. After an interval of several moments the knock was repeated. Then the knob was turned and the door opened. Shasta did not move.

"Nobody home," whispered a voice.

"Looks like it, Buck. We'll wait and surprize him, eh?"

"Yeah—sure. Mebbe we better cache them horses first. If he sees the horses he'll suspect somethin'."

"Yuh think so, do yuh?" snarled Shasta. He straightened up like a jack-in-a-box, his double-barreled shotgun covering the two men, who were standing just inside the room. They were Grove, alias Henry Smith, and Buck Shreve, the deputy sheriff of Greasewood.

Shreve was a sallow-looking, middle-aged man of average size, with coal-black eyes. They snapped wide open at sight of the old Lazy JN cook. Henry's right hand was half-way to his holster; he had either just replaced his gun or was reaching for it.

"Huh-hello, Shasta," he gulped. "How are yuh?"

"Easy on the trigger," said Shasta evenly. "Lift yore hand, Grove. Keep yore hands where they are, Buck. I'll shore frig-a-see you road-runners if yuh move a eyebrow."

"What's the idea?" demanded Shreve angrily. "You can't monkey with the law, you —— old fool!"

"With the law? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! So yo're on a lawin' trip, are yuh? And who in —— give you any license to come lawin' over here into Cherokee?"

"That's our business. Put down that gun."

"When I do," said Shasta, "it'll be empty—and you won't see me put it down. Unhook yore belts. No, Buck! Yore belt buckle is in front, not over yore right hip. That's it—that funny-shaped jigger that holds yore belt together. Fine— No, jist let her drop. Now, Henry— Very good— Step away from 'em, gents."

He herded them away from the belts, which he secured.

"How's everythin' in Greasewood, Buck? Set down on that old sofy. Yeah, both of yuh together."

Shasta sat down across from them resting the barrels of the old shotgun across the table. At that angle the twin circles of the shotgun muzzle covered their waist-lines perfectly. Henry shifted uneasily, rubbing the palms of his hands on his bony knees.

"This is the same gun I got Levis with," said Shasta. "At this distance I can put all twelve buckshot in yuh, Henry. And it's so easy on the trigger, I jist have to be plumb delicate. And you know how I twitch sometimes, Henry. I reckon it's rheumatism."

"My God, don't start twitchin'!" whispered Henry. He knew Shasta would not hesitate to kill both of them.

"Yo're storin' up misery for yourself," warned Buck Shreve.

"Nossir. My conscience never will bother me, Buck—not even for the killin' of a deputy sheriff. Now what did you fellers expect to steal here?"

"Steal, ——!" exploded Buck. "I've got a warrant for Jack Dean."

"Warrant for what?"

"For shootin' the sheriff of Greasewood."

"Don't try to make me laugh, Buck. You know —— well Case Newton shot the sheriff."

"He did not!"

"He did so. And the sheriff downed one of the Lazy JN horses that night when yuh rode into town, Henry. Case thought the sheriff was one of us and shot the sheriff."

"Listens good," scoffed Buck. "But yuh can't prove it."

"He don't have to prove it," said Shasta. "I can go to court and send the whole smear of yuh to the pen. Now what do you think of that?"

"You'd have a job, Shasta. The best thing for you to do is to put up that shotgun. I can send you up for killin' Levis."

"Shut up, Buck!" snapped Henry. "Yo're in a —— of a position to tell him what yuh can do. Shasta, for the love of gosh, git yore fingers away from the triggers! We ain't doin' nothin'. Show a little sense, Buck."

"By ——, I'm an officer of the law!"

"Yea, but that shotgun don't know it—and Shasta don't care. If I knowed you didn't have no more sense than that, I'd never come with yuh, that's a cinch."

"You knew they turned Jack Dean loose, didn't yuh?" asked Shasta.

Buck nodded quickly.

"And yuh knew the Cherokee sheriff wouldn't help yuh arrest Jack on that Greasewood charge, didn't yuh?"

"Well?"

"So yuh thought you'd kidnap him, eh?"

"I dunno whether you'd call it that. I've got a warrant for his arrest."

"Thasso?" Shasta grinned widely. "Henry, I'm goin' to ask yuh to do me a favor. Take that warrant out of Buck's pocket."

"Like ——!" roared Buck.

But Henry took it. Henry would have fought to get it, because he was afraid not to.

"Tear it all up, Henry. Tear it jist as small as yuh can. That's fine enough. Now reach inside Buck's vest, kinda under his arm-pit, an' git that six-gun out of that shoulder-holster. Take it out slow, holdin' it kinda dangly, an' let it fall on the floor. Nice work, Henry. Now kick the —— thing as far as yuh can."

Henry kicked it across the room.

"Knowed yuh had it, Buck. You wanted to take out that warrant, didn't yuh? Wanted a chance to get that gun. You've got the chest-strap through a hole in yore shirt, so it don't show across yore bosom. But there's a button off yore shirt, an' I seen the strap. Folks don't usually wear straps across the bosom of their undershirts."

Buck swore openly. He cursed Shasta with every curse he had ever heard and then invented some new ones to fit the occasion.

"How's everythin' at the Lazy JN, Henry?" asked Shasta, when Buck exhausted his vocabulary.

"There's jist me and Case. He's sellin' out. That night was too much for him."

"Henry, do you want to do somethin' for yore country?"

"I dunno, Shasta—why?"

"Who was the outfit that the JN got all them horses from over here?"

"I dunno, Shasta. I never worked this end. Most always it was Levis and Bush. Sometimes Newt came. If Newt knowed he never said. Bush didn't know and I don't think Levis did. The men they got 'em from was masked, I understand."

"I heard that. They played safe, eh? What was most of the brands?"

"A lot of 'em was Mission Cross Anchor."

"What in —— do you want to know for?" growled Buck.

"None of yore —— business."

"I'll make it my business, if—"

"If I put down this gun, eh? Both of yuh git up. Head for the door."

Shasta followed them outside. Buck's bay horse was tied to the porch and Henry's bridle reins were hooked around the horn of Buck's saddle. Henry was riding a wild-eyed sorrel. Shasta herded them off the porch and told Henry to take off the saddles.

Wondering what it was all about, Henry removed the saddles. Neither animal showed any marked degree of docility.

"Yank the bridles," ordered Shasta.

"But them —— brones will—"

"Yank them bridles!"

Henry yanked. The two horses swerved past them and trotted across the yard, heads up, going toward the main gate.

"By ——, they won't stop this side of Greasewood!" snapped Buck angrily.

"I kinda figured on that," grinned Shasta. He sobered suddenly.

"This here shotgun is plumb effective at fifty yards, an' she packs the sting of a hornet at a hundred," he told them. "I ain't so very well educated, an' I might miss a few figures, so yuh can take all this in consideration and act accordin'-ly. I'm goin' to give you two rattlers jist ten counts to git out of range—an' stay out. You can pick yore direction, but I'd advise Greasewood."

"You mean—we've got to walk?" cried Buck indignantly.

"I'd advise runnin', Buck—at least for a while. Walkin' to Greasewood ought to kinda fix on yore memory that Cherokee don't need yuh. Now hit the grit, 'cause I'm goin' to start countin' an' I might miss a few numbers. Git! One—two—"

And they went. Henry was half-way to the gate before Shasta counted his second number, while the shorter-legged Buck went galloping away, hat in hand, trying, it seemed, to catch Henry, who streaked for the sage-brush like a quarter-miler who needed the winning point to gain eternal glory.

Shasta did not need to count any further. It seemed that neither of the runners had any idea of how long it would take to count to ten, because as far as Shasta could see them they were still going fast, expecting at any moment to hear the roar of that shotgun behind them. And far ahead of them went the two loose horses which had been raised in the Greasewood range—heading home.

Shasta hung up the two saddles along with the guns in the house, put the torn warrant on the table and went ahead with his cleaning. He was paying them back for some of the things they had done to him when he had had no weapon except cans of tomatoes or a cleaver too heavy for throwing.

SHASTA said nothing to the three other members of the Bar D when they came home that evening, but it did not take them long to discover the saddles, guns and the shredded warrant.

Then he told them in a humorous way of how he had sent the Greasewood deputy and the alias Henry Smith home on foot. Jack Dean patted Shasta on the back and thanked him for what he had done, but Shasta wanted no thanks.

"Wouldn't 'a' missed it for a farm," declared the old cook. "I shore had 'em worried. And before they get to Greasewood they'll have plenty blisters to remember me by."

"They wanted to kidnap yuh, Jack," grinned Hashknife. "And you wouldn't have a chance in the world. They'd swear they caught yuh in Greasewood."

"That bunch would swear to anythin'," declared Shasta. "I shore ached poor old Buck when I called the turn on his shoulder holster. I never heard more cuss words in my life."

"They'll try to get you for that, Shasta," said Jack.

"Slip-ree ellum!" snorted Shasta. "I hope they do. I'll write 'w-e-l-c-o-m-e' on their hides with my buckshot."

"Anyway, the plot gits thicker," laughed Sleepy. "First we find five hundred in Jack's old clock; they give back what they stole from the stage; and now they steal our broncs and leave 'em in another man's corral. Are they crazy, Hashknife?"

"Jist like a fox."

"Do you see any reason for doin' things like that?"

"Not yet, Sleepy. Somethin' else has got to happen before I get a hunch."

"Happen to who?"

"Anybody. Of course a lot depends on who it happens to."

"I forgot to tell yuh somethin'," said Shasta. "I asked that human lodgepole from Greasewood about the masked men who furnished horses to the Lazy JN, but he didn't know who they was. But he said that a lot of the horses was marked with the Mission Cross Anchor."

"Friar Tuck's brand," said Jack. "They're gettin' even with him, I reckon. And some day they'll kill him."

"What do you know about that War-Whoop outfit?" asked Hashknife.

"Spook Murphy's outfit? Oh, they're all right. Lot of Injun blood. We never see much of 'em except at roundup time. Raise a few horses."

"What's their iron?"

"Double Arrowhead, connected with a bar. It's a big iron, too, and they brand on the left side. Kills the sale of a lot of horses for Spook. Nobody wants a horse with a big mark like that on it. But an Injun never seems to understand."

Hashknife nodded, as he rolled a cigaret.

"Who hates you, Jack?" he asked.

"Who hates me?"

"Bad enough to have planted that money in the clock?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Hashknife. I haven't any enemies that I know anythin' about."

"Well, you've got 'em. Anybody hate yore wife?"

"They shouldn't," quickly.

"Same answer," sighed Hashknife. "Who hates Friar Tuck?"

"You mean about leavin' them horses in his corral?"

"Yeah."

"I don't know. Perhaps the Red Triangle, Hashknife."

"The same for you, eh?"

"I don't know why they'd hate me. Friar has been tryin' ever since Barney Ellis was killed to get 'em. He haunts the hills, lookin' for 'em. But I haven't hunted 'em, so I don't see why they want me out of the way."

"You knew Ellis, Jack?"

"Sure. We went to school together in Cherokee. He was quite a lot older than me. Barney was wild. I don't doubt that he stole that Diamond F horse, and he probably made the remarks about doin' it again if he got a chance. He was salty. But he wasn't such a bad fellow. And Friar swore by him. Friar's dad wasn't much to the kid. He lived quite a lot with Barney."

"What about old John Wolf who was the second one killed?"

"Just a harmless old Injun. They found him beside a corral on Pine creek. He didn't have any enemies. He paid his debts and minded his own business."

"What about Wier?"

"Ike Wier? Just a wild-ridin' puncher—all bark and no bite. Ike never hurt anybody and he was a good cow-hand."

"No enemies?"

"Not that I ever knew of, Hashknife."

"Mm-m-m-m. Looks to me as though the Red Triangle just killed for the fun of the thing."

"That sounds cheerful," said Sleepy. "After the warnin' we just got, I'd say it was awful good news."

"A warnin' don't hurt," said Shasta gravely. "They used earth-paint instead of blood this time."

"Mebbe there's an omen in that," said Hashknife seriously. "It may be that the Red Triangle is out of blood."

"I wish they wasn't," said Sleepy. "I'm no source of supply, by golly. I'm sure goin' to look anæmic from now on."

THERE was no warning on their door the next morning, nor were their horses taken, even with the broken padlock hanging in the staple. While the boys of the Bar D exercised a certain amount of caution nothing seemed to happen.

Day followed day until it seemed that Cherokee was back to normal again. Sleepy and Jack spent much of their time in breaking horses, while old Shasta perched on the top-pole of the corral when not preparing food. But Hashknife was not inactive. He rode from ranch to ranch, making friends with every one, especially with Jack's father whom he grew to like very well.

He even hobnobbed with Marsh Conlan at the bank, and told yarns with Old Man Elder, owner of the stage-line. Scotty McLeod was around, apparently as well as ever. Scotty had told of his experiences in Twisted River, until every one decided that Hashknife was rather a wonderful person, or that Scotty was the prince of liars.

But all this inaction was unprofitable to Hashknife and Sleepy. They were not being paid for loafing around. Frank Dean offered to make a place for Hashknife. He was full-handed and did not want to let any of his old punchers go, but Hashknife declined with a grin. Where there was not room for Sleepy, there was no room for Hashknife.

John Elder offered Hashknife a job driving stage, but it was declined with thanks. Henry Clay Boggs looked upon Hashknife with gloomy eyes and told Scotty that his idol had feet of clay, or words to that effect.

"He ain't no better than we are," he told Scotty. "As far as puttin' the leather on the Red Triangle, he ain't a bit of use."

"Wait, can't ye?" asked Scotty. "R-R-R-Rome wasn't built in a day."

"Rome what?"

"Italy."

"What in —— have the Italians got to do with it?"

"Ye have no br-r-rains, Henry Boggs."

"I'll weigh heads with you any old time, Scotty."

"I'll not compete with anybody of such solid construction, Henry. I tell ye, Hashknife's waitin' for somethin'."

"The —— he is?" quizzically. "So am I. I've been waitin' ever since I've knowed you, Scotty."

"Waitin' for what?"

"Waitin' for you to buy a drink."

"Oh, ye have, have ye. Well, I'll shake the dice with ye."

"My ——, yo're stingy, Scotty!"

"Not at all, Henry—fr-r-r-rugal."

"Same —— thing, Scotty."

HASHKNIFE had ridden out several times to see Friar Tuck, and they discussed the Red Triangle. Friar's ranch-house was small, and his tastes ran to the aboriginal, evidenced by the number of Indian blankets, rugs and baskets. But Friar was a good housekeeper, and the place was clean. On the wall was one of those crayon enlargements, ornately framed, of Barney Ellis.

He had been photographed in his Sunday clothes, which accounted for the pained expression above the ill-fitting celluloid collar, the badly tied four-in-hand. On the lapel of his coat gleamed a celluloid button, framing a girl's face. From this picture it was difficult to know just what Barney Ellis had looked like in life. For if he closely resembled this picture it was strange that Friar Tuck had idolized him so, Hashknife thought.

Friar was a very solitary young man. Once in a while he came over to the Bar D and spent the evening playing penny-ante with Sleepy, Jack and Shasta, while Hashknife lounged on the sofa, smoking cigarets and half dreaming.

It was becoming a prosaic existence for Hashknife. A month had passed since the morning of their warning. Molly was coming home, so she said, although Jack tried to convince her that everything was not serene. He did not tell her about the money in the clock, nor did any one know of it except the four men at the Bar D. And there was still the Greasewood gang to figure on. It was hardly reasonable to suppose that they would do nothing. The two saddles, belts and guns were in the ranch-house.

As far as the JFT outfit was concerned, they had not lost any more horses, but Frank Dean was not optimistic enough to imagine that the horse-thieves would not come again. Hashknife had talked seriously with Marsh Conlan about Jack, with the result that Conlan had paid Jack's debt to the Paragon and accepted it himself. Hashknife firmly believed that Jack was cured, and Marsh Conlan had enough faith in the tall, gray-eyed Hashknife to pay the debt gladly.

Shasta Jones firmly believed that the Red Triangle gang were from Greasewood, and that he was responsible for their ceasing operations in Cherokee.

"They're scared of a shotgun," he told Hashknife. "I tell yuh, I've busted their nerve."

Hashknife grinned and patted him on the back.

"Mebbe yuh have, Shasta."

"I'd bet my shirt. But I'm still watchin', cowboy. Their saddles and guns are still here, and them two savages ain't makin' no donations."

"It's a good thing to remember, Shasta. They'll get yuh if the chance comes up."

"Well, I'll be hard to git. I ain't never far away from that shotgun. I wish you'd git me a box of shells next time yo're in town. Number tens, loaded with BB-shot. I want to mix up the shot with hot candle-wax and make a solid load. It's plumb effective at a hundred yards thataway."

Hashknife laughed and promised to get the cartridges. Old Shasta was very much in earnest. His eyesight precluded the use of a rifle, and he was wearing Buck Shreve's six-shooter merely as an emergency weapon.

Jack came back from town that evening and told the Bar D boys that Molly insisted on coming home the next day.

"I've tried to argue it out with her but she won't listen," he said.

"We need a woman around here," declared Shasta. "Mebbe we'll quit swearin' an' wash our faces once in a while."

"The kitchen won't be yore castle," laughed Sleepy.

"I don't need no castle, Sleepy. Mebbe I'm gettin' old. Once upon a time I'd like to see anybody monkeyin' around my kitchen, but it's different now. Mebbe there ain't enough goin' on to keep me keyed up."

"Why don'tcha try throwin' cans?" suggested Hashknife. "Kinda keep in condition."

Shasta laughed and shook his head.

"Couldn't hit anythin' now, I don't suppose. Used to be pretty good at it. Kinda side-spin 'em, yuh know. They shore smack. I hope Levis knowed who killed him. He was allus sayin' he was goin' to dance on my grave."

THE following day Jack hitched a team to the buggy, and drove to Cherokee, with Hashknife and Sleepy following on horseback. Shasta reminded Hashknife about the shotgun cartridges again.

And as soon as they were gone Shasta began house-cleaning. It was rather hard work for the old man, but he wanted Molly to know that a man could keep house as well as a woman. The one thing that Shasta prided himself on was making bread, and he intended having a fine batch to show Molly when she arrived.

As soon as the house had been thoroughly cleaned—at least, according to Shasta's idea of a thorough cleaning—he attacked the bread baking. It was well past the noon hour when he heated the oven and mixed his dough. For once since his coming to the Bar D, Shasta Jones was so occupied with his work that he forgot the two saddles hanging up in a bedroom.

It was hot in the kitchen. He placed the last of the loaves in the oven, closed the door and went to the doorway, mopping the perspiration off his brow. Several chickens pecked about the dooryard, coming up very close to Shasta's feet.

He looked off toward the north where he could see the road leading toward Cherokee and wondered how soon Jack and Molly would be coming. He would be able to see the dust from horses and buggy at least a mile away. He turned to go back in the kitchen, but stopped. Far in the distance he could see the tiny cloud of dust along the road.

"Jist in time for some hot bread," he said aloud.

Came the sound of a distinct *splat!* followed by the sharp report of a rifle. The chickens scattered quickly. Shasta had been shading his eyes with his left hand, and now he lowered it slowly, a puzzled expression in his eyes. Then he grasped at the side of the doorway for support as he fell backward into the kitchen, his booted feet still extending out over the doorstep.

EVEN after Jack had loaded Molly's trunk on to the back of the buggy he had tried to dissuade her from going out to the ranch. But she only laughed at him.

"Of course, if you don't want me, Jack," she said, and that settled it. Jack did want her very much.

Hashknife and Sleepy were not in evidence when Jack and Molly rode out of Cherokee, but their horses were tied at the Paragon hitch-rack.

"It'll be like a second honeymoon," said Jack as they rode along the dusty highway. "You just let Shasta do 'all the cookin'. He's a fine old man, even if he does have some blood-thirsty ideas."

"The only thing that bothers me is that Hashknife and Sleepy will leave," said Molly. "We can't afford to hire them, and they can't stay here always."

"No, that's true, Molly, and I hate to see 'em go. Hashknife is gettin' impatient. I can see it in his eyes when he smiles with his mouth. His eyes don't always smile. He says he's got an idea that ain't workin' out."

"Dad likes him," said Molly. "And your dad likes him. I heard him say he did. I like him, too, Jack. He's so serious and so tall and thin. You never know what he's going to say next, and you never know whether he's in earnest or not. He seems to look through you, don't you think so, Jack? I'd hate to have to lie to him."

"Well, I wouldn't lie to him," grinned Jack. "No use of it."

They were almost in sight of the ranch, going slowly up a steep rise in the road, when they heard the far-away report of a rifle shot.

"Wasn't that a shot?" asked Jack.

"Sounded like it," agreed Molly.

They topped the rise and drew up the team, but there were no more shots.

"It's funny," said Jack as they drove on. "A few months ago we'd never pay any attention to a shot. There's so many reasons for rifle shooting on a cow-range that ordinarily we'd never give it a second thought, but now—"

"Yes, it's different now," agreed Molly.

Everything seemed serene at the Bar D ranch. Smoke was coming from the kitchen chimney, and Jack pointed at it with his whip.

"Shasta's cookin' up somethin' for supper," he laughed.

"And some of the rugs are draped over the porch railing," laughed Molly. "I'll bet he's been cleaning house today."

They drove up to the porch and tied the team. Shasta did not come out, so they decided he was too busy to have seen them drive in. As Jack started to take the trunk from the rear of the buggy, Molly stopped at the bottom of the steps, sniffing the air, which was redolent of something burning.

"Smells like bread burning," said Molly quickly.

"Went to sleep and forgot it," laughed Jack, hoisting the trunk to his shoulder.

Molly opened the door for him, and he surged in—stopped stock-still just inside the room, balancing the trunk.

Paying no attention to Jack, Molly stepped in beside him before she saw what had stopped him. Case Newton, Grove and Buck Shreve, the deputy of Greasewood, were standing just in front of them, each man with a six-shooter in his hand.

Molly did not know them. Jack recognized Grove as the tall cowpuncher who had knocked him down at the Lazy JN.

"Yuh can set the trunk down," said Shreve coldly. "But be —— careful what yuh do with yore hands."

Jack lowered the trunk carefully and stepped back, trying to shield Molly.

"Nobody goin' to hurt the female," growled Newton. "Yo're the little birdie we're after, Dean."

"So yuh came to try it again, eh?" said Jack.

"Not to *try* it this time," grinned Grove. "This time it's a cinch."

"I've got another warrant for yuh, Dean," said Shreve. "You better take his gun, Case. Yuh never can tell about these tough *hombres* from Cherokee."

Case removed Jack's gun from his holster, while Shreve drew out his warrant.

"Oh, yuh don't need to read it," said Jack coldly. "We both know it's a lie, so why read it?"

He turned to Newton.

"Yo're Newton, ain't yuh? I thought yuh was. Shasta described yuh several times. Yo're the jigger that shot the sheriff."

"Yo're crazy!" snorted Newton.

"I reckon not. Where's Shasta?"

Shreve jerked his head toward the kitchen entrance.

"He's in there—cold. We couldn't take any chances on him and his shotgun."

"You killed him, eh?"

"Nothin' else," grinned Grove. "It was a lucky thing for us that we seen yore dust. We didn't no more than pull him into the kitchen before yuh hove in sight."

"And so yuh shot him cold, eh?" Jack's jaw shut tightly.

"He had his shotgun—we had to," said Shreve quickly. The shotgun in question was on the table a few feet away. Grove saw Jack look at it.

"Oh, we brought it in here," he said.

"More lies," said Jack. "Yuh bushed him."

"Yeah?" Case Newton grinned at Molly. "Yore husband talks big, ma'am. By golly, yo're a pretty girl. Nothin' like you has ever crossed my trail. Sorry to take yore husband away, but you can git a better one. This'n ain't much for looks."

The three men laughed loudly. Molly bit her lips, but did not reply.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Jack. "No matter what yuh do—you'll pay."

"Pay?" Grove laughed. "We're merely goin' to take yuh to Greasewood to try yuh for shootin' the sheriff. Nothin' could be more fair. You'll git a square deal, won't he Shreve?"

"Square enough to suit us," laughed Shreve.

He reached in the pocket of his chaps and drew out a pair of handcuffs.

"You don't need them," said Jack.

"No-o-o? We-e-ell, we'll jist use 'em anyway, Dean. Can't be no slip this time."

As Shreve stepped toward Jack, Grove glanced through a side window which gave them a view of the stable, and before the handcuffs snapped on Jack's wrist Grove exclaimed loudly—

"By ——, look out!"

A quick glance was sufficient. Hashknife and Sleepy had dismounted at the stable, and were looking toward the house. Those within the house did not know that black smoke was eddying out through an open window at the end of the kitchen—smoke that carried the unmistakable odor of burning bread.

Grove whirled and grabbed up a rifle which one of them had leaned against the table and hunched down near the window. Just to his left was the entrance to the kitchen, only a few feet away.

Molly tried to scream. From her angle she could see the two cowboys, just starting toward the kitchen. Grove cuddled the stock to his cheek, while Shreve, holding the handcuffs in one hand, shoved the muzzle of his revolver against Jack's belt.

The gun muzzle steadied.

Whap! Something struck Grove in the head, knocking him sidewise, and the rifle went off, jarring the room. Grove dropped the rifle and balanced himself on one hand, while a can of tomatoes rolled crookedly across the floor.

"What the ——!" howled Grove, reaching for his cheek, where the edge of the can had marked him. Case Newton sprang over and picked up the rifle, levering in another cartridge, but the two cowboys, warned by the misplaced shot, had taken a chance on going straight ahead and were now at the rear of the kitchen.

"Now, there's —— to pay!" wailed Grove. "It's them two punchers that outsmarted us at the JN. What hit me?"

He stepped to the kitchen door, his revolver swinging in his right hand. Old Shasta was sprawled across the floor, where he had fallen after firing his one tomato-can shot. Grove cocked his gun, but before he could shoot Shreve stopped him with:

"Quit it, you —— fool! We've got live men to deal with. Jerk down that window-shade! Not the window, you fool!"

Shreve snapped a handcuff on Jack's right wrist, yanked him to his knees and snapped the other cuff around the leg of the table, above the round.

"You better git down low," he said to Molly. "This ain't goin' to be healthy, I'll tell yuh that."

Molly backed into a corner and sat down on the floor. The three men were frightened, there was no question about that.

"Can't we make a break for the horses?"asked Grove.

"And get all leaded?" snarled Shreve. "It seems to me that it was yore idea to leave the horses back there in them willers, Grove."

"We're three to two," said Newton. "We'll get 'em."

"Yeah, but we don't know where they are," complained Grove.

"They're behind the house, if that helps yuh any," said Newton. "By ——, we'll take Old Man Jones' scalp back with us for spoilin' that shot."

Regardless of the lady in their midst, Grove heaped vituperations upon the head of Shasta Jones. The can had cut a gash in Grove's cheek, and the blood bothered him.

"Mebbe one of 'em has gone to town for

help," said Grove, rubbing his hand on his knee.

"They don't need help," said Jack. "You gents better drop yore guns and walk out with yore hands in the air."

"Fat chance!" snapped Shreve. "When we go—you go!"

"They're pretty square fellers, "grinned Jack. "Why not put it up to them? They *might* overlook the killin' of old Shasta Jones."

"Yeah, they might," sneered Newton. "Don't worry, we'll get out, and you'll go back with us. We may have to take the lady along, too. Yuh see, she knows too —— much for our health."

"Yuh don't like that so well, do yuh?" snarled Grove.

"You watch that winder!" snapped Shreve. "And don't forgit that there's nothin' but a winder-shade between you and the outside."

"What's in that other room?" asked Newton, pointing to the door which led to Jack's bedroom.

"I dunno what's in it now," grinned Jack. "There's an outside door and window."

"And there's another door leadin' into the hall," stated Jack, as an afterthought. "And another bedroom back of that one, which opens into the hall and has an outside window."

"This is a —— of a place!" wailed Grove. "Too many doors and winders."

"Too much for a fort," said Jack.

"You shut up!" snapped Shreve, and then to Grove, "See if yuh can work into that back bedroom. They might be in the house already."

"Work back there yourself," retorted Grove nervously. "You got us into it."

"Nobody forced yuh to come. You wanted to git even with 'em for makin' yuh walk home."

"I guess you didn't! Oh, no—not you."

Molly was getting her courage back. For her there was a feeling of security, even if Hashknife and Sleepy had made no move to help them. She smiled at Jack and he smiled back at her. Buck Shreve saw the exchange of smiles, and it made him angry.

"You'll grin different when this is over," he gritted.

"Oh, —— it, I've got a notion to make a break for the horses," said Grove.

"You stay here," growled Shreve. "They'd git yuh before yuh made three jumps."

"It ain't over two hundred yards, Buck."

"Well, let's do somethin'," said Newton.

He was humped over on the couch trying to watch two windows at the same time. The windows were open, but the shades were down. A slight breeze blew them inward at times and Newton instinctively ducked his head. It was hard on his nerves. Shreve's hard eyes studied Jack and Molly. He would have given much to have been miles away from that spot.

Suddenly one of the shades tugged downward and flew up to the top. Newton fell off the couch, flat on the floor. On the ring at the bottom of the shade hung a long willow branch with a forked limb hooked over the ring.

Shreve sprang back toward the kitchen entrance, out of line with the window. Grove swore bitterly and took a shot at the other window on that side of the house, where another stick was angling for the ring. His bullet ripped through the shade, but did not prevent the man outside from jerking it down, tearing it from the roller.

Case Newton crawled swiftly across the floor and stopped against Shreve. Not to be outdone, Grove sprawled quickly and headed for the kitchen. Inside of ten seconds the window where Grove had tried to shoot Hashknife and Sleepy from, lost its shade, and Grove fired one wild shot at the disappearing shade.

Only remained the shades at the two front windows, and none of the three Greasewood men felt at all inclined to go and guard these.

"They can cross-fire this room now," cried Grove. "Oh, why in —— didn't we take a chance at first?"

"The kitchen is our only chance," said Shreve.

Grove took one peek around the edge of the doorway and jumped back.

"There ain't no curtain on that one, Buck!" he yelled.

"Watch the winders!" snapped Newton. "Don't get jumpy, you danged fools. We're as good shots as they are."

"Mebbe we can hold 'em off until dark," said Shreve hopefully. "It won't be more than an hour or so. If we'd only had sense enough to shut them winders!"

"If we'd only had sense enough to stay away," said Newton.

Outside the house Hashknife and Sleepy were debating on what to do next. They did not know what had happened to Jack and Molly, nor were they sure just who was in the house, as they had not seen any of the inmates, nor had they seen the Greasewood horses, which had been tied in a willow thicket farther up the creek.

But they had listened closely enough to the conversation in the house practically to identify Grove's voice. It had been Sleepy's idea, the tearing down of the window-shades, more as a psychological move than for any material benefit.

Now, following Grove's wild shot through the unprotected window, they were backed against the wall near the kitchen door. They heard Grove's exclamation about the kitchen window being uncovered.

"Scared stiff," whispered Hashknife. "A little more and they're plumb jumpy."

Sleepy nodded, grinning. Hashknife whispered softly to him, dropped to his knees and crawled rapidly around to the front porch. He staked everything on the hope that none of the men in the house would dare look from a window.

He snaked his way over the edge of the porch, and his feet disappeared around the corner. Sleepy edged back to the kitchen door, cautiously turned the knob and suddenly threw the door open. It banged against the table which was behind it.

Almost at the same moment the front door swung open, disclosing nothing but the open yard, the sunlight, the trees along the stream. It was too much for Grove—that and the banging of the kitchen door.

He ducked low and bounded for the front door, his long legs taking him across the room in three strides. All he could see was a straight line to those horses in the willows. And as he sprang outside, a long leg shot out across his path, and Grove turned a complete flip-flop over the porch steps and landed flat on his back at the bottom, the back of his head hitting the lower step with a resounding thump.

The other two men, undecided what to do, bumped into each other wildly, and just to keep the ball rolling, as it were, Sleepy rolled a heavy stone through the kitchen doorway and across the floor.

Case Newton was game. He sprang into the kitchen, expecting to face one of the attacking force, but there was no one. The door was open, as was the window. For a moment he relaxed, turning his head quickly back toward the living-room, and in that instant Sleepy raised up, framing himself in the kitchen window, his big Colt leveled across the sill.

"Don't move!" he snapped. Newton jerked convulsively. His gun was pointed downward and he did not dare twist his wrist. His big body almost filled the doorway of the living-room.

Suddenly Buck Shreve sprang in behind him, swinging his revolver past Newton's shoulder, but Buck did not fire. From the front door came the crashing report of a heavy revolver and Buck jerked sidewise, his lowering hand firing the heavy bullet into the wood-box, the flash of the shot almost searing Case Newton's rigid right hand.

Shreve did not fall but staggered against the wall, trying to reach his right shoulder with his left hand. Newton had been shoved a step forward, but he made no move to lift his right hand. Hashknife came in behind him, wrenched the gun from his hand and picked up the one Shreve had dropped.

"The dance is over, gents," said Hashknife softly.

Shreve swore weakly, dangling a broken arm, as Hashknife herded them into the living-room. Molly was crying with relief and Jack laughed foolishly when Sleepy secured the key from Shreve's pocket and unlocked the handcuffs. Then Hashknife got a rope and tied Grove securely. Shasta Jones was still lying on the kitchen floor, and Hashknife went to him.

"Is it all over?" he asked hoarsely, much to Hashknife's surprize.

"And you ain't dead?" Hashknife blurted.

"Not yit," Shasta sat up, but with difficulty. "They hit me along the ribs and knocked all m' wind. Oh, I reckon I've got plenty t' show for where it hit, but I ain't goin' to die. I fooled 'em, didn't I?" Shasta laughed. "Them Greasewood pelicans thought I was dead, so I played 'possum to keep from gittin' shot ag'in'. But when I seen Grove start to shoot from the winder, I grabbed a can of termatters off the table and, by ——, that time I hit!"

"Was that what made the bullet go hay-wire?" asked Hashknife.

"That was it," declared Jack. "It hit Grove on the cheek, just as he was pullin' a bead on one of yuh."

"Good boy!" exclaimed Hashknife. "We'll get yuh to a doctor as soon as we can, Shasta."

"I can use one," said Shreve painfully.

"You be —— grateful yuh can!" snapped Sleepy. "That was a smart idea you had—shootin' me from behind Newton."

"Well, what are you goin' to do?" growled Newton. "What can yuh do?"

"We can try yuh for attempted murder, that's a cinch," said Hashknife. "It ain't yore fault that Shasta ain't dead. If I ain't mistaken, a Cherokee jury will give yuh what yuh need."

"We were sworn in as deputies to help arrest Jack Dean. You can't jail a deputy sheriff."

"You've got a sweet idea of the law, Newton," replied Hashknife. "If you think we can't—you'll see somethin' done that can't be done. Get a rope and tie up that deputy sheriff, Jack."

Hashknife examined Shasta's wound, which had cost him some blood and possibly a broken rib, but the bullet had not done much worse than slither off his body and knock all the wind out of him. But Hashknife decided merely to make a temporary dressing and take Shasta to a doctor.

"And that —— bread is all burned to a crisp," wailed Shasta. "I smelled it burnin'. I was knocked cold, I tell yuh. And then I smelled somethin' burnin' and I says to myself, 'Shasta, yo're dead and in hell already.' But I got a good whiff of it, an' I knowed what it was. I couldn't hardly move an' I heard 'em talkin' about me bein' dead, so I jist layed doggo.

"But I had an idea I might git my hands on that shotgun, so I got to inchin' around, wonderin' where it was. I'm layin' kinda under the table an' the edge of that termatter can was projectin' a little, so I reaches up and picks her off. I dunno jist what in —— I aimed to do with one can ag'in' three six-guns—but I'm so used to throwin' cans, yuh see.

"And when I seen Grove duck down beside that winder, I've got a hunch it's you two boys, so I raises up on my left arm and I heaved that can as straight as an arrer. Then I fell down and laid still."

"You sure pulled us out of a hole, old-timer," said Hashknife. "You and that can of tomatoes saved one of us."

"Both," said Shasta. "Grove is a dead shot, sittin', standin' or runnin'."

Hashknife had dragged Grove back to the porch. He was just recovering from his flip-flop which almost broke his head.

"How does it feel to hit on the head?" asked Sleepy.

Grove batted his eyes wearily and grimaced at Sleepy.

"Kinda foolish of yuh to come back, wasn't it?" asked Sleepy.

"Kinda?" groaned Grove. "—— foolish, I'd say. What happened to Newt and Buck?" Grove didn't care even to turn his head and find out for himself.

"Buck's got a busted shoulder and Newt don't feel very good either," grinned Sleepy. "Are you a deputy sheriff?"

"——, no! Buck's the deputy. Me and Newt jist came along to collect them saddles."

"Shut up!" snapped Newton, and Sleepy laughed at him.

"We'll have to take Shasta and the deputy to the doctor," said Jack. "I'll take 'em in the buggy."

"You better find the team first," said Hashknife, slitting Shreve's sleeve with a pocket-knife. "They busted loose when Grove pulled his pin-wheel dive."

Jack found the buggy team tangled up in the corral fence, where the buggy had lost a few spokes. He unhitched the team and proceeded to make such repairs as were possible with a pair of pliers and some baling-wire.

Hashknife patched up Shreve's shoulder and got cursed for his pains. It was getting dark when Jack finally pronounced the buggy in shape for the trip. Shasta climbed in with him, and Sleepy helped Shreve to the seat. The Greasewood officer was getting quite sick.

Hashknife used Shreve's handcuffs on Newton and a rope on Grove. Sleepy secured the three horses of the Greasewood men from the willows. Hashknife supposed Molly would want to go back to Cherokee, but when she decided to stay at the ranch he told Jack to stay with her and let him do the driving.

As Hashknife started to get into the buggy he happened to glance at the horse Newton was riding. Turning away from the buggy, he walked over and examined the horse closer. On its left shoulder was the Mission Cross Anchor brand. Hashknife smiled at Newton.

"I reckon that'll cinch you, pardner—yo're ridin' a stolen horse."

"I told the —— fool!" blurted Grove.

"I bought this horse," said Newton savagely.

"Yeah?" Hashknife ran his hand over the brand. "You did, eh? Well, the owner of that brand can say whether yuh did or not."

"Yo're —— right!" snapped Newton. "He can prove it."

Hashknife grinned softly and got in the buggy. Hashknife had been in the Cherokee range long enough to be familiar with the size, shape and location of every brand used there. He chuckled as he drove away from the ranch, and Shasta wondered what was the matter with him.

They drove slowly. The road was rough, and Hashknife knew that Buck Shreve was suffering torture, for Hashknife's bullet had broken his arm near the shoulder. Behind the buggy rode Newton and Grove, with Sleepy a few paces in the rear. As a measure of precaution Sleepy had linked their two horses together with about five feet of rope.

"They'll have to eat burned bread for supper," said Shasta. He couldn't keep his mind off cooking.

"They won't care," said Hashknife. "Don't worry, Shasta."

"No-o-o-o. Say, I sure throwed that can straight."

"Shut up, you —— old fool!" snarled Shreve.

"Don't call me a —— old fool, Buck! I'll climb yuh right here in this buggy."

"Start climbin', you old rattler!"

"Both of yuh shut up or I'll dump yuh out," declared Hashknife. "The idea of you two fightin'!"

"Make him shut up," begged Buck. "—— him, he aches me with his tongue."

"I've listened to you enough," retorted Shasta. "I was the under-dog a long time, Buck. If you don't go to the pen, it'll be because I've lost my voice and gone so paralyzed that I can't talk signs. Why, yo're cock-eyed and crazy to ever come out of yore own county. Jack Dean never shot the sheriff."

"Oh ——, I'm not goin' to argue with you about it."

They finally drove into Cherokee. There was a great number of horses at the hitch-racks, and Hashknife suddenly remembered that it was Saturday night—the big night of the week in the cow country. The stores would be open until nine o'clock.

Hashknife drove slowly down the street, heading for the sheriff's office. There was music in the Paragon. Hashknife leaned out and looked toward the big saloon, drawing his team to the left to let a cowpuncher, riding a half-wild horse, swing past him.

And just then, without any warning, the world seemed to come to an end. Hashknife had a vague sensation of being blown aside, while in his ears was the whine of missiles as if a mighty shotgun had been fired at him. He groped his way back to a land of reality and found that he was sitting in the middle of the street.

Some one screamed. Then men began pouring out of the stores and saloons, questioning each other, talking in loud voices. Loose horses were running about the street. Hashknife got to his feet, still slightly dazed, but unhurt, as far as he could discover.

"Hey! What the —— is goin' on?" cried a voice.

It was Sleepy Stevens. His horse had been knocked down, and was still down. The buggy had been overturned, dumping Shasta and Buck into the street, and the buggy team was taking the wrecked vehicle straight down the middle of the street as fast as the two frightened horses could travel. Case Newton had also been thrown, and his horse was heading out of Cherokee by the shortest route along with that of Grove, who was certainly making no effort to stop either horse. His destination was Greasewood.

Hashknife staggered over and helped Sleepy to his feet. Men were rushing past them, yelling at each other. Shasta was swearing at Buck Shreve, who was lying across him, knocked out. Ignoring the reasons for things, Hashknife untangled Shasta and Buck, and helped Shasta to his feet.

"Well, f'r —— sake!" exploded Shasta. "What hit us? Didja ever hear such a complete bust in yore life? Didja? Where's my hat? Slip-ree ellum!"

"It's the bank!" yelled a man. "It's been all blowed to ——!"

Hashknife picked up Buck Shreve and carried him over to the Paragon steps, where he propped him against the wall, while Sleepy led the wondering Newton over there and told him to sit down before he got knocked down. It was all right with Newton—he was quite willing to sit down.

"Better watch 'em," said Hashknife. "I'll investigate."

He went across the street where a big crowd of men were milling around the front of the wrecked bank. The sheriff and deputy were trying to keep them back, when Hashknife shoved his way through.

"What happened, Bunch?" asked Hashknife.

"God only knows!" panted the sheriff. "Keep back, you boys! Nobody knows what it was. Mebbe it'll bust ag'in'."

"It won't," declared Goober Gillis. "There wasn't but one bust like that in the world, and it's done busted. Every winder in the Paragon is knocked out."

"Every winder in town," amended Henry Boggs.

Marsh Conlan came through the crowd, which opened to let him pass, and Hashknife walked in with him. The bank was a complete wreck. The front had been blown completely out, and the ceiling sagged dangerously over a mulligan of grillwork, desks and the other things that go to make up the interior of a bank.

Hashknife and Conlan lighted matches as they crawled over the débris, and in a few minutes Jew Mulligan brought a lantern to assist them in their inspection. The big vault-like safe was intact—not even the combination dial knocked off.

Fearful that the ceiling might drop at any time, they came out and reported to the crowd that the safe had not been blown, as many of them had feared. The doctor was in the crowd, and Hashknife told him about his wounded men. With the aid of Jew Mulligan and Goober Gillis, Hashknife and the doctor took

Buck Shreve and Shasta for treatment. Shasta was able to walk, but Buck was fairly limp.

Sleepy stayed with Case Newton, waiting for the sheriff to calm down sufficiently to take charge of the prisoner. As far as Grove was concerned, Sleepy figuratively kissed him good-by. The crowd began hunting loose horses, discussing the dynamiting and examining the broken windows along the street.

Frank Dean came along and halted near Sleepy, eying Case Newton, whose manacled hands were in plain sight.

"Who's your prisoner, Sleepy?" asked Dean wonderingly.

"Little birdie that flew over from Greasewood," said Sleepy. "One of them absent-minded jiggers that always takes the wrong horses."

"Yo're a —— liar!" snapped Newton.

"Speaks plain English," grinned Sleepy.

"From Greasewood, eh?" Frank Dean grew interested. "Better jail him before the boys know who he is, Sleepy."

"Waitin' for the sheriff, Frank."

"Where did you get him?"

"Out at the Bar D. Him and his gang tried to kidnap Jack. Hashknife took one of 'em to the doctor, and one got away when the world exploded a while ago.

"Did Grove git away?" asked Newton.

"It sure looks thataway to me."

"Yo're out of luck," said Newton. "Grove was the one that shot Shasta Jones."

"Passin' the buck, eh?"

"Tellin the truth."

"You'll have a sweet time provin' it."

Hashknife came back with the two JFT cowboys.

"Better find the sheriff," advised Sleepy. "I want to git this feller off my hands."

"All right," Hashknife turned on his heel and went into the Paragon. Frank Dean and the two cowboys followed him in. The sheriff was in there, as was Marsh Conlan. The room was blue with tobacco smoke, roaring with conversation. It seemed as if all of the Cherokee range were there. Friar Tuck was at the bar, having a drink with Dick French and Spook Murphy, while other men crowded the bar, clamoring for drinks.

Hashknife stopped in the center of the room, looking around. Several cowboys yelled at him, inviting him to have a drink, but he ignored them. Marsh Conlan and Frank Dean were just a few feet away from him, talking together, and the sheriff was just beyond them, looking around the room. Hashknife pushed in closer to Conlan, who saw him and turned.

"It might interest you to know that a red triangle has been painted on my front gate—at my home," said Conlon. "I found it this morning."

"I saw it," nodded the sheriff. "They must have intended to smash the safe, and the stuff went off ahead of time or somethin' like that," he ended lamely. "I dunno, Hartley."

Hashknife looked around and his gray eyes hardened as he slowly shifted his belt. The sheriff noticed this. There was something ominous in the way Hashknife's big right hand brushed softly across the butt of his Colt gun, as if to have it just right. He tightened his palm slightly over the butt, lifting the gun a trifle and took his hand away.

"Gents!" Hashknife's voice lifted sharply above the roar of conversation. "Will yuh be quiet a minute?"

The noise died suddenly. Here and there a cowboy coughed, a boot scraped, a spur jingled. The men at the bar turned to see what he wanted, many of them still holding their glasses.

Hashknife waited until all sound had ceased. His lips were smiling, but the shaded eyes beneath his wide hat were as cold as ice.

"We had a run-in with some fellers from Greasewood today," he said slowly. "They came to try and kidnap Jack Dean. They shot old Shasta Jones, but didn't kill him. But we got there in time to head 'em off. One is under the doctor's care, along with Shasta Jones;

one got away in the explosion we just had, and we've got the other."

"Good boy!" applauded Jew Mulligan. The rest of the crowd remained silent, feeling that there was more to come.

"I happen to know that the man we've got has stolen horses, but whether the law will accept our evidence or not is still a question, unless I can prove it right here."

He turned to Friar Tuck.

"This might interest you, Friar. This man is ridin' a tall bay horse with a white face and one white stockin' in front. It's branded with the Mission Cross Anchor and he swears he bought the horse from you."

Friar scowled thoughtfully for a moment.

"Yeah, I sold that kind of a horse," he said slowly. "It was two or three months ago. This man said he was from Greasewood. He came to the ranch, on his way across the divide, and liked that bay horse, so I sold it to him for sixty dollars."

"Well, that settles the evidence as far as that's concerned. Now—" Hashknife hunched his shoulders and turned to Marsh Conlan and Frank Dean. "Boys, you've got to shoot square with me now," he said earnestly. "It means a lot to everybody. Come clean," Hashknife's voice was vibrant, tense.

"What is it, Hashknife?" asked Conlan.

He was nervous. Something told him that this tall cowboy, whose face had turned hard, the grinning lines wiped out, his mouth but a thin line above that square chin, knew something that only two men were supposed to know.

"Don't deny me," said Hashknife. "I know, I tell yuh! It's the only possible explanation. Marsh Conlan, you and Frank Dean and Shorty Pierce killed Barney Ellis."

It was the second explosion of the evening—an explosion that stunned every one, but made no noise. Friar Tuck swayed away from the bar, his right elbow bent, his eyes upon Hashknife. Marsh Conlan and Frank Dean were like two statues. But they did not quail under Hashknife's accusation. For the space of ten seconds neither of them spoke. Then:

"Well?" said Marsh Conlan evenly "We did, Hartley. We had to. We went out there to warn him out of the country, and he drew a gun. I shot him myself."

"Shorty Pierce shot him," corrected Frank Dean coldly.

"The Red Triangle, eh?"

It was Friar Tuck. His hat was on the back of his head, which was shoved forward, the murky lamp-light shining on his cheek-bones. He looked every inch the Indian now. His right hand was flexed over the butt of his low-hanging gun.

"The Red Triangle, eh?" he repeated the words triumphantly.

"Ain't you jist a little previous?" Hashknife's voice was softly pitched. Friar Tuck switched his eyes to Hashknife.

"What do yuh mean?" he rasped.

"You've got red earth-paint on yore hands!" snapped Hashknife.

For a fraction of a second Friar's right hand jerked upward, and his eyes flashed downward.

Tricked! He knew he was tricked in that split-second, and his right hand flashed back to the butt of his gun, which seemed fairly to leap into his hand. But too late. As fast as he was, the tall, hard-faced cowboy beat him to the draw, and his big gun thundered in that crowded room—with only the width of a poker-table between them.

Friar Tuck's right arm buckled and the gun jerked out his hand, but he was still game. He dropped to his knees and swept the gun up in his left hand, but Hashknife flung himself into Friar, pinning his left arm against the bar. The sheriff sprang to his assistance.

And before the thunderstruck crowd fully realized what had been done, they had thrown Tuck into a chair, where he leaned back, white-faced, trembling all over.

"—— you, you can't convict me!" he

panted. "You've got no evidence. Go and get the guilty men, you fools!"

Hashknife stepped back against the bar, eying Friar.

"That horse cinched yuh, Friar," he said, just a little breathlessly. "You was kinda smart, at that. You brand on the same spot that the JFT does, and you worked the JFT into a Double Cross Anchor. It went fine, unless yuh examined it close. Yore brand is bigger. You sold all them JFT horses to that Greasewood gang."

"Prove it!" snarled Friar.

"It's been proved by that gang themselves. Shall I bring Case Newton of the Lazy JN in here to prove it? You killed old John Wolf because he caught yuh alterin' brands. Yuh killed Ike Wier because he saw yuh stealin' horses, and was on his way to tell it. You stole from Frank Dean, because you knew he was one of the men that killed Barney Ellis.

"You saw all three of them men, Tuck. It was revenge with you. You killed Shorty Pierce. You wanted to break Frank Dean. After you robbed Shorty Pierce you hid five hundred dollars of the money in an old clock in the Bar D ranch-house while Jack was gone, because you thought it might incriminate Jack Dean.

"You stole our horses that night and brought 'em back the next mornin', just to put yourself in solid with us and to find out what we thought of yore red triangle warnin'. You painted yore sign on Marsh Conlan's gate last night, because yuh had to leave yore mark for the dynamitin' tonight.

"You covered yore trail pretty well, Tuck—but you made one big mistake. You confined yore operations to only three men, and you gave back the money you stole from the Salina stage when you found out that Marsh Conlan wouldn't lose by the robbery. And you was too active against the Red Triangle to not have anythin' happen to you. Do yuh need more proof?"

"They said yuh was a bloodhound," mumbled Friar. Suddenly he threw up his head and laughed heartily—the laugh of a crazy man.

"I fooled yuh," he said, chuckling. "I swore I'd pay 'em back for killin' Barney."

He lifted his head and stared around at the faces, blinking painfully.

"He was the best friend I had," he said simply. "They wiped his blood on his door, makin' a red triangle. By ——, I gave it back to 'em, didn't I? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

"Crazy as a loon," said Hashknife. "He's been crazy for a year. Better lock him up and get a doctor for him, sheriff."

The crowd stood back and let the sheriff lead him away—the lone man who had terrorized Cherokee, the last of the fighting Tucks, who would never pay the penalty of his crimes. Sleepy had forced Case Newton inside the saloon just before the shooting, but now Sleepy fell in behind the sheriff and Friar Tuck, herding Case Newton ahead of him.

And while the crowd in the Paragon milled toward the door, watching the men cross the street, Haskhnife slipped out through the back door and went hunting for Sleepy's horse. He found it with other horses at the hitch-rack, and led it around to the sheriff's office, where he met Sleepy. Together they went down to the doctor's office and left their horses at the gate.

They could hear voices lifted in argument coming through an open window. They sneaked to where they could look in. Buck Shreve was lying on a couch, his neck and shoulder swathed in white bandages, while in a deep rocking-chair sat old Shasta Jones, half-naked, his ribs bandaged. Some one had evidently called the doctor for Friar Tuck.

"Aw, shut up!" wailed Buck.

"I won't shut up," retorted Shasta. "This is my night to howl. Didn't that feller tell the doctor that Hashknife put the deadwood on the Red Triangle gang? Didn't he? ——, you don't need to think he got uppity over landin' you and yore gang. You was jist a iota to him, Buck. Know what a iota is?"

"Oh, go to ——!"

"Nossir. I'm goin' to set right here and see that you don't try to git away, Bucky. Slip-ree ellum! I jist happened to think that out of all the fighters past and present, I'm the only one that ever used termatters for offense and defense."

Hashknife touched Sleepy on the arm, and they went back to their horse. And while Cherokee searched everywhere for the men who had solved the mystery of the Red Triangle, the men were riding one horse back to the Bar D to get Hashknife's gray Ghost.

The other side of the hill was calling them again.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all Meeting-Place *for* Readers, Writers *and* Adventurers

OUR Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit *of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.*

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

BACK to our old reliable discussion of chiggers, chigoes, jiggers, nuguas, red-bugs, wood-ticks, jigger-fleas *et al.*:

Newark, New Jersey.

Dear Camp-Fire: The obvious desire of Camp-Fire to find and to give the truth about events and things should excuse an attempt to add a little to the light given about something, or some things that excite interest, and profanity, in folk in warm climes.

IN RELATION to chiggers, chigoes, jiggers and, to some folk of some of our States, wood-ticks, or red-bugs, mentioned in "Camp-Fire" by E. St. Clair Clayton: Under whatever name they dig in, they are right interesting to many who are within their field of action.

I myself acquired, during an exploration of the ruins of a fort by the mouth of the Chagres River, in Panama, and also on the Sabana near the city of Panama, colonies of red-bugs, wood-ticks, jiggers, or whichever name you deem most fit; but the natives there and of Central America, and members of the health department of our Canal Commission also, named them fitly "coloradillo," or "little red."

Natives of some of our southern States have told me that red-ticks, or wood-ticks, are a noticeable product of some fields and forests there, and that they seem to be the same as the coloradillos.

MEMBERS of the health department of the Panama Canal Commission, and other friendly folk, advised me to bathe with alcohol my legs when they were tormented by coloradillos. Later I suspected that those advisers had less personal experience than I had.

For that stimulant seemed to stimulate to greater activity the little red demons that were digging under my epidermis. After cogitation I took a half-hour bath in an emulsion of soap-suds and kerosene. Every coloradillo went on strike immediately, stayed idle, and left no lasting mark.

Some foreigners in Spanish America have given the name "chigoe" and "jigger" to what my Spanish-English dictionaries practically agree in describing as "Nigua—the chigoe, jigger-flea."

But, even if the nigua is of the flea family it never jigs, to give an excuse for accusing it of being a jigger. Instead of jigging it moves quite gently, slowly, from floor or ground to and upon bare feet, or ankles, or knees, and settles there where the digging in is comparatively easy and protected.

Usually the lady nigua settles on a sheltered spot, usually between toes where the skin is thin, soft, and digging in will be easy. There she deliberately, gently retires to quiet or to safety, to start a family great in number of its members if small in size of its individuals.

THESE members may wander, not swiftly, beneath the outer layer of skin, and one may feel mightily tickled by these movements; yet not so much as one would be by coloradillos putting in their work.

In tropic climes I have seen a number of persons who were hosts to hosts of niguas in feet, in ankles, or in knees; more precisely, under the epidermis of those parts.

And a single bath of ten minutes, of kerosene and of soap-suds, taken together, so affected the settlers that they quit at once, leaving a dead epidermis to bury its dead, or to go with its niguas.

With assurance of my hearty appreciation of the work of comrades who help to make the Camp-Fire interesting as well as to make history trustworthy, I remain, at your service.—EDWARD PERRY, Chief-of Staff, Department of New Jersey, G. A. R.

A WORD from Post Sargent concerning his "bio-tale" in this issue. I think I've already explained that Post Sargent is one of the very, very few of our writers' brigade who do not write under their own names. He is in reality a member of the faculty of one of our leading universities and is particularly well equipped for what he is doing in our pages.

I am presenting Rostand's idealized character from another point of view, less idealized, more human, just as historical. I have brought out several—a number—of interesting facts about his life and character that Rostand did not present: his influence on Molière, Racine, Swift, etc.; the fact that he was not a Gascon; the strange comic adventure with the monkey Fagotin; the further fact that he was, like most of us, a complex of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—in his case, a strange mixture of poet, dramatist, generous friend, philosopher and cruel bully.

The introduction of Dumas' character, d'Artagnan, has no warrant in anything in print. The friendly fencing bout is a literary liberty that finds its excuse in the fact that the two great swordsmen were contemporaries, must have been well acquainted, and *should*, in the nature of things, have tried out each other's skill. It allowed me to present another great and *real* adventurer from the historical point of view, and to say a word or two about the sources from which Dumas drew.

I have been tempted from the start of these "Goodly Company of Adventurers" articles to add a sub-title to each. I have wanted to coin a word representing, I think, a literary *genre* that differs somewhat from the short story, the article, the short biography. My word would be *Bio-Tale;* meaning the combination of certain qualities or attributes of the three types of writing.

But I refrained, since the title heading is loaded down enough as it stands—POST SARGENT.

HERE'S one out of the cache, dating back a bit over a year. I like it. It's so easy to pick one flaw in a story or in a "Camp-Fire" letter and to overlook two things—first, that the writer thereof has been O. K. on perhaps hundreds or thousands of other points on which he *could* have gone wrong, and, second, that the critic himself may have slipped up on something—as in this case. The fact remains, however, that we want letters from the critics even if they, too, do slip up now and then.

Mistakes are friendly, humanizing things as well as helpful things, if we handle them right.

Marion, Ohio.

Dear Gang:—I have been sitting 'way back listening to a lot of smarter fellows than I "do their stuff," and have had many a grin at the arguments.

In the December 10th issue that I have just been looking over, one of the boys raises a roar about more accuracy regarding guns and says further, "It gets me just as it would get you if an author said 'The Ford was hitting perfectly on all of its six powerful cylinders,' or some such absurdity."

I wonder if it wouldn't have been a better letter had he added *the simple little phrase*—"the Ford was of late vintage with only four cylinders, etc.," as during the early history of the Ford company it made a large six-cylinder car and I know of at least one that is still in service at Lancaster, Ohio, or at least it was a few months ago.

Now, fellows, argue that one out.—C. B. RUSSELL.

THERE'S a good deal to say on the following and space is precious, so I'm going to say my say in our smaller type:

Probably most of Camp-Fire have taken more or less interest in our new Travel Association that some of Camp-Fire are helping us build up, but I want to give you a slant on it from the general Camp-Fire angle.

What we are working toward is not just one of these ordinary travel bureaus. It's something much bigger and more interesting than that and consequently it takes a deal more time and work to bring it into full-fledged being. It's already far enough along to give you all the practical service an ordinary travel bureau gives and some things that a travel bureau doesn't give, but that's only the start toward the interesting and unusual possibilities ahead of us.

Here's a glimpse of what can be done, a sample of how our general travel machine is capable of working. It has become more and more clear that the chief need of all kinds of travelers is *local information*. We've been amazed to find the quantity of printed information that can be supplied free to travelers. But they don't get most of it because they don't know it exists. We'll tell 'em where and how to get it—are already prepared to do so through our central office here. On top of all that there are our "A.A." experts all ready to supply further and specific information. "Books" to steer them safely on reading up, "Straight Goods" to steer them as to equipment of all kinds—and, still further, here are *you* in Camp-Fire. And it's you we're counting on to put the final touch of value on what we're building among us.

It is too obviously true to be considered flattery when I say that no other agency or group of people can do it so well as you can. In the first place you of Camp-Fire number hundreds and hundreds of thousands. More important, the mere fact that you come to Camp-Fire proves you have the interests and information needed for this particular work—for this sample that shows how big a machine we have at our disposal to make A.T.A. a world-wide and world-known *institution*.

Here's the sample—

On top of the information service that, with the factors named above, is already the makings of one of the most thorough travel information services in existence, we plan to add a super information service. In each issue of the magazine A.T.A. is going to take up one foreign country, group of countries or section of the U. S. The program will be laid out and announced in advance. There is no section of the globe on which among the hundreds of thousands of Camp-Fire there are not many of you who have first-hand, exact, detailed, familiar knowledge. In most cases there are some of you actually living there now. And the information you have acquired is of all kinds and gathered through all kinds of approaches.

For you are yourselves of all kinds—scientists, explorers, collectors, globe-trotters, adventurers, hoboes, soldiers, sailors, business men, engineers, doctors, historians, missionaries, travelers, ranchers, writers, what have you. Your *collective* knowledge on any part of the world would make the attempts of any one statistician, historian, trade expert, etc., look very small and incomplete.

Turn your collective knowledge, then, on this or that country or district and tell the rest of us what are the things and places in it that are most worth seeing. The guide-books do that, of course, and there are books on every place, but you who know both the books and the lands they cover know how much is left untold. A book is almost always written by one person and no one person has seen it all, nor is what interests him most going to interest everybody else most. But, among us, we've seen about all that anybody has seen and naturally we see things from about all the points of view there are. Boil down, sift and systematize our collective knowledge and you have a tabloid guide-book that's never been even approached for practical, vital value.

For example take Argentina. I can offhand think of quite a number of you myself who know about it from personal experience, who live there or have lived there. Even a few dozen of you can give the prospective traveler (whether tourist or adventurer) interesting tips he's not likely to find in any book. I've traveled across Argentina myself, after reading quite a bit about it—and come home to learn from various Camp-Fire comrades about things and places I'd have liked to see but of whose very existence I was ignorant.

A double use will be made of such information when passing it on in practical form to prospective travelers and to readers in general First, and perhaps most important, there will be the *consensus* of opinion from all points of view as to which are *the* most interesting places to visit and sights to see including both things mentioned in guide-books and things guide-books don't know anything about. Second, there will be the interesting places and things that have appealed most strongly to a few, that have perhaps been seen by only those few and that are in any case the things an ordinary traveler would probably never even hear about.

And we want to get at it right away. We're laying out the schedule of countries and will print it as soon as possible, but you need not wait for that. Take any country or countries of which you have intimate, first-hand knowledge and briefly and concisely list out the most worth-while points, in your opinion, for a traveler to see. Thus:

Place or thing
Why interesting
How reached
Easy, rough or very rough trip
Expense (general idea)
Time needed; best season of year

Naturally, between such countries as France on one hand and Siam on the other, the basis of selection will be very different. One is already well known and well covered; the other quite the opposite. The point as to such countries as France is that they're so well covered that the prospective traveler gets dizzy if he tries to select the really best points instead of just hitting the usual high spots—he needs a guide in selection, a consensus of opinion. He's likely to go where some friend recommended and let it go at that. Well, here are thousands of friends and we'll give him the consensus of their opinion.

So will you turn to and send us whatever good pointers you have gleaned from first hand so that all the rest of Camp-Fire can profit by your help and so that we can together build up for our magazine a travel institution that all of us will be proud to be connected with and that will be unique and preeminent in its field? There's only one Camp-Fire and it can do what can't be done by any one else.

THIS letter from Walter J. Coburn of our writers' brigade wasn't really written to Camp-Fire, but to me personally. However, since I've omitted proper names, I know Mr. Coburn will very willingly let Camp-Fire read it too. Particularly as he wants to thank Camp-Fire for putting him into touch with an old friend.

Carmel by the Sea, California.

Want to thank "Camp-Fire" for a letter that came the other day from a little town back in Illinois. The writer, an old cow-hand who worked for my dad years before I was born, had read my letter in "Camp-Fire" and immediately sat down and wrote me a letter that read like a chapter from cow-country history. He must be pretty well along in years. Said his hair was white and I reckon it is. He'd punched cows, mined, soldier in the Philippines, under-sheriff in Montana when a man had to be a sure-enough go-getter to hold his job. Then, to quote him, he "drifted east and had his horns knocked off." Did I answer that five-page letter? I sure did and raised the ante about three pages. I'm saving that letter and if I ever get to New York I'm going to bring it over and let you read it. There aren't many of those old-timers left, and the pitiful part of it is that they're as young in mind as they were forty years ago.

Take ——. —— had gray hairs in his head when the Missouri River was a creek. I got a letter from him several months ago. He wanted to know if there were any jobs in the Arizona country. Said he was too good a hand to work as a common waddie—but if he could run a wagon, he'd come south. Now that old son-of-a-gun is past eighty but he meant it!—WALTER J. COBURN.

SINCE I couldn't recall that Clements Ripley has had first-hand experience of the Bering Sea sealers I wrote him, after reading "Smoky Seas," our new serial beginning in this issue, and asked him about it. He replied frankly and specifically in the following letter and, from what I know of Mr. Ripley, we should be fairly safe in replying on the soundness of color and material used. To accord with our usual custom in such cases we should—as Mr. Ripley suggests—have changed Petropavlovsk to some fictitious name but somehow—didn't.

Samarcand, North Carolina.

While I have never made a trip with the sealing fleet or been myself in the Bering Sea, I have a pretty good knowledge of the matter treated in the story. I was brought up in the Pacific Northwest and was at one time fairly familiar with the ships and personnel of the Victoria fleet. I have talked a good deal with sealers of the old school and I think have soaked up a good deal of information from them. Some of my characters in "Smoky Seas" are drawn directly from sealers themselves—notably *Oscaar*. As to life aboard a sealer, methods of taking seal, etc., I think I am pretty safe. I am also indebted for matter checking up my own information to Jack London's "The Sea Wolf," to the Encyclopedia Britannica and to various other sources.

As to the actual seamanship of the handling of the schooner, I am fairly well on my own ground there. That rig is rather a hobby with me and, while it is some time since I have been aboard one, I don't think the most meticulous reader can find fault with the way I have sailed the Bering.

In general the climate, topography, etc., of the islands and mainland of the Bering Sea are well known to me by hearsay. One of my sources of information there is my friend, Mr. Belmore Browne, the Alaskan explorer who made the first ascent of Mt. McKinley.

As to Petropavlovsk, in Kamchatka, I am frank to say that I am a little vague. In general I know what those small ports on that coast are like, but if some one reads the story who has been to Petropavlovsk he may have reason to feel that I have taken liberties with the actual laying out of the town. I don't think, for instance, that there was a fort commanding the harbor entrance at the time of the story, although there was one formerly. If you think this point is important I can easily substitute a fictitious name for the town. I remember once a man who objected strongly to my taking a transport up the Min River to Foochow on the grounds that there wasn't enough water, and I know *Adventure* readers are particular about such things. I don't believe the point is important here, however.

As to the law in the case—process of condemnation of a poaching schooner, sentences imposed, etc., I confess to being a little vague and I have not tried to make them definite in the story. They are not important to the story either, I think. I do know that the Russian Government did at one time condemn ships and send crews to Siberia to the mines for poaching.

The actual time of the story would be the eighties or early nineties. I have not stressed this point in the story, however, feeling that it was better to let the reader make his own time in the same way that the writer of a "western" writes of the West of the seventies as though it existed today. I do not mention the war or the soviets for this reason.

I think myself that the local color is quite safe. I may have made some slips, although I do not think so. I am quite certain that there are no important ones. I say "important" because I know that in all important details the story is correct, but I also know that there is a type of reader who must have his details exact. There are no bad breaks I am sure, and I don't think there are any at all.—CLEMENTS RIPLEY.

OF ALL the changes that have been made in our magazine this last half year the only one that has not been greeted enthusiastically by an overwhelming majority of our readers is the change from our old picture covers to the solid color ones. On that point many of you expressed regrets—some of you even mourned bitterly or kicked with vigor. The answers to these objections is the cover of this issue. We in the office welcome the change. The plain covers served a useful purpose in emphasizing the difference between our magazine and the popular all-fictions and in calling added attention to its entrance upon a new era. But that purpose was a temporary one and has been served. Between the extremes of the old-time full-page picture covers and the plain solid colors we're giving you illustrated covers in harmony with the decoration of the inside of the magazine, all done by the same artist, Rockwell Kent.

In judging, don't forget that a magazine cover must do more than be artistic. It must also serve the practical purpose of being striking and individual on the news-stands and should be characteristic of its magazine. It can not be judged by itself alone; there is also the matter of contrast and relative values in connection with all the other covers on the stands. We in the office like these new covers of ours very much but it's your judgment on them that we want.

FROM L. PAUL a few words concerning his story in this issue—the third of a series laid in New Brunswick:

Ottawa, Canada.

Here are real people for you. *Softy Shanks*—real name and whereabouts not to be mentioned, for railroad moguls don't like 'em softhearted in the hobo belt—*Softy*, I hear, is now Admiral of a plush upholstered Limited Train, wearing brassbound uniform. But he still has a heart of gold and, if broke, they say, a man may ride with him just the same.

Red Alick may be seen in all jails, on most railroad grades, and in many jungles. Bad right through. I have not overcolored him. *Smoothface*, I believe, has become a somewhat respectable citizen, but is apt to lapse again. With a frock coat and cornet and a good voice he is a great help—or was—at some camp-meetings. *The Evangelist* is a composite. I knew one with two grave faults—a love for unseasonable and loud prayer, and a thirst for red-eye—but, not wishing to give pain to excellent folk who follow the more emotional religious leaders, I have toned him down a heap. *Bookie*, I believe, is dead. When I saw him hauled out of a box-car by the dicks he swore in two dead and five living languages and from his pocket dropped Plato's "Republic" in the original Greek.

That's the lot—the others have appeared before. —L. PAUL.

AT THE time you read this the Adventure Abyssinian Expedition will be somewhere on the Red Sea. We can't say just where. But it's on its way.

Good news, isn't it? Our own expedition, conducted by a man we all know, who will write for us a daily account of the experiences of the expedition as it pushes into the heart of one of the few countries left that are worth exploring. It is such good news that we wish we could have passed it on to you back in January, when we first knew that it would be possible for us to send the expedition out. But you know the answer. Magazines have to be made up ahead of time. Even now we are able to squeeze into print only the outline of one of the biggest things that has happened to us for a long while. There will be details later on.

The main fact is that on February 10th Gordon MacCreagh and his party will set sail for Abyssinia to attempt, among other things, to penetrate the mountain fastnesses of that country and discover the truth behind certain native legends there.

The most interesting fact is that besides leading the expedition Gordon MacCreagh will write for our magazine full accounts of its progress, which accounts we will publish if, as and when they come out of the mountains of Africa.

The expedition will conduct scientific research concerned with things that interest all of us. Is the true Ark of the Covenant somewhere in the mountains of Abyssinia, as the natives believe? Does a tribe of Jews there practice rituals and ceremonies handed down from Solomon's day? Can Celtic inscriptions be found on ruins south of the capital, Adis Abeba? Do tribesmen on the Sudanese Border hunt elephants and tigers with swords similar to those carried by the Crusaders?

Moreover, besides looking for the answers to these questions the expedition will do other things. There will be big game hunting, and Mr. MacCreagh will collect specimens of Abyssinian wild life for the United States National Museum, perhaps more commonly known as the Smithsonian Institution.

Three rare species of wild ape are particularly to be sought.

But mostly—and this is the really important thing—Gordon MacCreagh is going, as he says, "to see what he can see," and to write about for us—on the spot. All of you who know Gordon MacCreagh as a member of our writers' brigade and an A. A. man—he's been with us about fourteen years now—need not be told that he can do this particular job, or rather combination of jobs, particularly well. Just for additional evidence, as well as for your own enjoyment, you might buy or borrow a copy of his latest book, "White Waters and Black" in which he describes his experiences on another expedition, on which all the other members were scientists and he the only member with jungle experience.

Or look up the Camp-Fire—it is in one of the November issues, 1921—that contains a letter to us written from the Bopi River while he was on that expedition. They will help give you an idea of what you can expect in the way of a thoroughly human account.

Because an expedition into wild lands can not run on schedule while a magazine must, we can not say now just when what he writes will get into print. Magazines, as we have remarked before, have to be made up ahead of time, and the difficulty of getting copy from the mountains of Northeastern Africa to a composing room in Brooklyn with any speed and surety can readily be imagined.

But although it's a difficult job it is not altogether impossible, and you can look for Gordon MacCreagh's first article on the experiences of *Adventure's* Abyssinian Expedition sometime, it is safe to say, this coming June.

In the meantime we'll try to tell you in Camp-Fire something about the preparations that had to be made before the expedition could get under way, and to give you the latest bulletins on its progress toward Adis Abeba.

Adventure's Abyssinian Expedition is on its way.

AS YOU know, it is our custom to print in this space a short biography of one of our authors so that readers may know more of them than may be revealed in their stories. This time, however, we thought you would be more interested in hearing about the artist who has brought back the picture to our cover and has drawn all our headings and decorations for the last three issues.

You know his work in our magazine; very possibly you know it outside of our pages. But the man himself you may not know. So if you have not met him—gentlemen, Rockwell Kent!

We chose Mr. Kent to decorate our book for two reasons. First, he is one of the most noted artists working in America today. Second, he is an adventurer, in body and in spirit. With him adventure and art are almost indistinguishable, so dependent on each other are they. He lives adventure, and interprets it, and the world is moved by his art.

"Many of us can see beautiful things and want to make music, but we can't do anything about it." That was what Johansen the Finn said when Rockwell Kent, standing in the companionway of a little sloop in the harbor of Ushuaia, played a flute-song, a salute to the little town and the towering rocks of Tierra del Fuego and the quest on which he was sailing. And the Finn, who was not very much later to die on a wilderness trail, added, "I would give anything in the world to play that flute."

And there you have Rockwell Kent and the rest of us. We others may see and thrill to the wonders of the world, may even journey forth to discover new wonders, as does the adventurer, Rockwell Kent, but it takes the artist Rockwell Kent to interpret what he sees in such a way that others may share his feelings. Unfortunately most of us never can play that flute.

Nor is his career any bright shooting star's trail, springing from nowhere, blazing to a quick death. His art is built on foundations of sure technique. He does not search feverishly for "something to paint," but lets the world as he sees it inspire him. As a result there is a profundity and sweep to his larger pictures, a feeling of reality that convinces the beholder whatever his own view of these things might have been.

As for his life—the stuff from which his pictures are made—we can give you only a sketch of it here. He was born in 1882 in Tarrytown, New York. He studied architecture at Columbia University, taking courses in art also under such masters as William Chase and Abbot Thayer. After his graduation he was practising architect for a time. Then he left the city and went to Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine, where he built a house for himself and lived very simply, working as a manual laborer, digging ditches—and graves—working as a carpenter and as a lobsterman.

Then he came back to New York and gave his first one-man exhibition, at which no other artists showed pictures. It was one of the most sensational successes American art has known. After that Kent wandered about New England a while. He lived in New Hampshire, in Massachusetts, in Vermont. He spent two years in Newfoundland. He went to Minnesota as foreman of carpenters on a building scheme. By the way, he is a member in good standing of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

In August, 1918, he took his little eight-year-old son adventuring with him. They rowed out from Seward, in Resurrection Bay, Alaska, looking for some deserted hut where they might live. They found a man in a little motor-driven dory, and he told them that they might live on his island. So they went to Fox Island, where the man raised blue foxes, with no companions but his animals. In that lonely place the Kents, father and son, lived in a log hut chinked with moss, through the autumn and winter until the eighteenth of March. They sawed trees for firewood, and lived on strange dishes of their own invention with milk given by one of the old man's three goats. They were storm-beaten and snowed in, and once old Olson, master of the island, went away and left them to feed his blue foxes and worry about him for six weeks. The results for Rockwell Kent, he says, can not be told, but out of his experience that winter came a score of fine pictures and a book, "Wilderness."

Four years later he embarked on a South American freighter to the Straits of Magellan. He wanted to beat his own way down to Cape Horn. Everybody said that he was crazy, but one man agreed to go with him. They sailed in a twenty-six-foot boat from Punta Arenas down Admiralty Sound toward Tierra del Fuego. Their boat swamped on the first day out, and when they put into shore they were arrested; but as soon as the authorities who arrested them heard their story they helped to make the *Kathleen* seaworthy, and Kent and his companion put out again.

They crossed the western end of Tierra del Fuego on foot, a trip no white man had ever made before. They encountered the remote Indians reputed to be cannibals—and with them conversed about that most universal and monotonous of subjects, the weather. They followed paths made by wild guanaco through the forests, they became mixed in morasses hip-deep so that they had to take off their packs and use them as foundations for a precarious scramble to safety. We have seen Mr. Kent playing a flute; he also was barber to Chilian lumberjacks, and officiated at a christening. Afterward he wrote a book about his trip, called "Voyaging." It is an exciting book, even though Mr. Kent did not finally reach Cape Horn.

Mr. Kent has lived on the coast of Donegal and in France and Germany. His pictures hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in many of the principal museums in the United States and in Italy, Germany, France, England and Brazil. He is a Fellow of the American Geographical Society and a member of many artists' societies. His latest award was that of a gold medal for lithograph and woodcuts from the Sesquicentennial Exposition at Philadelphia.

Mr. Kent has six children. Some day, he says, he will buy an island for them to live on, and a boat so that when they wish to they can all go wandering off to find new adventures.—J. M. C.

ASK *Adventure*

For *free information* and *services* you can't get elsewhere

Questions and Answers

Accurate Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere

Books you can Believe

Verdicts by Experts on the Authenticity of Current Non-Fiction

Straight Goods

Reports on Tests by Our Experts of Outdoor Equipment and Commodities

Adventure's Travel Association

A Service Organization with Stations and Experts all over the World

Old Songs that Men have Sung

Collecting and Discussing Old Songs still Living among the People

WHAT is the value of a spade guinea found in the streets of Belfast? Not so much as has been supposed, but English army officers have a curious use for this eighteenth-century coin.

Request:—"I wish to know something about the spade guinea of England, struck during the reign of George the Third. I have heard that there were only three of them made and put into circulation, later being recalled. If this is true were all three of them returned or not? The reason I wish to know is that I have seen a coin claimed to be a spade guinea. It was found on the streets of Belfast, Ireland, about twenty years ago. The present owner does not know whether it is an imitation or not."
—DUNCAN SETTLE, Manhattan, Kan.

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—The spade guineas of George III have no especial claim to rarity. They were made each year from 1787 to

1799 inclusive, with the exception of 1796. They were never recalled, except as old money and worn coins are withdrawn from circulation. There is absolutely no truth in the statement that only three were made.

They have always been popular as a talisman, especially among English army officers, and in consequence one finds many of them with rings soldered to them or holes in them. As a coin they bring anywhere from $5.00 to $8.00, according to condition. They often bring more at jewelers to those who desire them as souvenirs.

Our Question and Answer service is free, but our experts can not reply to queries that are not accompanied by self-addressed envelope and stamp—not attached.

Fire Control Gear

TO REGULATE the fire of an airplane machine gun so that its bullets will pass between the blades of a revolving propeller is a nice feat of synchronization.

Request:—"Can you give me any of the desired information relative to the C-C and any other synchronizing gear used in connection with a Marlin or other machine gun?

1. Origin.
2. Invented by.
3. Operation—mechanical or electrical.
4. The names, operation and the designer of any gears other than the C-C.

Thanking you for any enlightenment on the subject."—E. B. JENNINGS, Globe, Arizona.

Reply, by Lt. Col. Schauffler—I was very glad indeed to receive your letter of inquiry concerning the "C-C" or Constantinesco Fire Control Gear, named after the inventor, Mr. George Constantinesco, a Roumanian. This is an hydraulic type of gear for controlling machine gun fire on an aeroplane, so that the bullets pass between the blades of the propeller. This is accomplished by means of wave impulses, originated by a cam attached to the engine and transmitted through a pipe line filled with oil to a trigger motor.

Although this gear is subject to much adverse criticism, it has found favor on account of its flexibility, the pipe line connection from the generator to the trigger motor permitting great freedom in locating the guns on the aeroplane. It is an easy gear to install and is adaptable to practically all engines. It was used on all American-built planes that were sent to the front and toward the end of the war it was the only synchronizing gear used by the British.

The "C-C" gear has not been developed in the American Air Service to the extent that it has in the British Service, due to the fact that the Americans have developed a mechanical gear to a point where it has proved more successful than the hydraulic type and has largely replaced it.

The gear is made up of the following units:

Generator Unit
Trigger Motor Unit
Reservoir Unit
Control Cable Unit
Pipe Line Unit

The last three units are essentially the same for all installations. The generator unit varies with the type of engine. The trigger motors are designed for the different guns and are named accordingly, as, Vickers, Marlin 1916, Marlin 1917, and Browning Trigger Motors.

There have been three sets of drawings and specifications on the American type of "C-C" gear. The first set prepared according to U. S. A. Standard Aircraft Drawings, approved 12-27-'17. The second known as Model A, issued by the Production Engineering Department, approved 5-20-'18. The third known as Model B, also issued by the Production Engineering Department of the Air Service, approved 9-29-'18. All these gears are essentially the same, although the early type was made according to the U. S. A. Aircraft Drawings and differs slightly from the later gears made according to the Production Engineering Department's specifications and are not interchangeable.

Model B has superseded Model A, and is the most used type "C-C" gear in the American Service. Although this type is designed with one ball in the control valve, it has been a practice to convert this into a two ball valve upon installation.

Models A and B are normally used with a Liberty Engine, but can be readily adapted for use with Le Rhone or Hispano-Suiza Engines by using generators especially designed for these motors.

The English "C-C" gear is made in types A, A-1, B and C. Types A, A-1, and B are essentially the same, differing mainly in the trigger motors. The A type uses the A type trigger motor; the A-1 type, the A-1 type trigger motor; and the B type, the B type trigger motor. These types have been superseded and largely replaced in the British Service by the C type, which uses the C type trigger motor, and also has improved control levers, control valves and a different type generator. This type is in use on some American planes purchased from the British and has proven very successful, eliminating many troubles found in the other types.

The D type Constantinesco gear is a mechanical gear end and must not be confused with the hydraulic gears. It was never used in the American Service, other than in an experimental way, and will not be included in this discussion.

The action of all types of "C-C" gear is the same. It regulates the fire of the gun so as to prevent bullets from striking the propeller. This is done by tripping the trigger only when the propeller is in a "safe" position. The impulse that trips the trigger is originated by the generator attached to the engine and is conducted to the trigger motor through the column of oil in the operating tube.

In order to carry these impulses the column of oil must be under considerable pressure. This pressure is supplied by the reservoir plunger and spring. When the reservoir plunger handle is drawn to the top, oil flows into the high pressure reservoir, and is put under a pressure of about 150 lbs. per sq. in. by the strong tension string coiled around the piston plunger.

When the pilot wishes to fire the gun, he pulls back the operating lever, which acting through the operating cable closes the low pressure side of the control valve and opens the high pressure side. The high pressure is instantly transmitted through the secondary pipe line to the generator and the operating tube. The pressure on the back of the generator plunger forces the plunger ball against the generator cam. As the hump of the cam strikes the generator plunger it forces it back against the oil pressure, generating a wave impulse which travels through the operating tube to the trigger motor. These impulses acting through the trigger motor plunger fire the gun. The damping valve in the tee-piece attached to the trigger motor prevents the impulse from rebounding and setting up conflicting vibrations in the oil column.

As long as the operating lever is held back, the gun will continue to fire. When this lever is released, the high pressure valve closes and the low pressure valve opens, permitting the oil to go through the secondary pipe line to the low pressure side of the reservoir, thus relieving the pressure on the system and allowing the generator plunger to fall away from the cam, thus preventing the generating of any more impulses. This cycle of operations takes place as often as the operating lever is pressed. Each burst of fire diminishes the stock of oil in the high pressure reservoir. When this stock of oil is low—condition which is shown by the reservoir handle being near its lowest position—it is replenished from the low pressure reservoir by pulling up the handle again. When all connections are tight, the high pressure reservoir contains sufficient oil for about a dozen bursts.

I am sorry that I can not give you the names of other gears at the present time. Several are being worked on experimentally and these can not be given out.

Clams

CROWFOOT drag, tong and wading systems—three ways of procuring this inland bivalve, which has better uses than to be cooked into a chowder.

Request:—"I would greatly appreciate any information on clamming that you could give me."—Byron Brose, Dubuque, Iowa.

Reply, by Mr. Thompson:—The clamming is getting pretty well played out up in the Mississippi River district on account of pollution and too many at it. Good places are White River, Ark., or Black River in both Arkansas and Missouri.

You can make money from shells, pearls and slugs. Get in the locality and learn from the natives the use of the crowfoot drag, tong and wading systems of procuring clams. Be sure before you go anywhere to write the State game warden about the clamming laws, as they are always changing them to help increase or save the supply.

Czechs

DO THEY make good soldiers? Well, during the war the Czecho-Slovak army went all the way around the world to get another chance at Austria on the Western Front—but that question is answered more conclusively below.

Request:—"I should like to ask some questions regarding Czecho-Slovakia.

Isn't a Bohemian the same as a Czech?

Is it true that the Czechs make good actors and singers or have a natural talent as actors or singers?

Can one learn to speak their language by instructors or by mail and if so where, in what cities?

What kind of climate has Czecho-Slovakia and what are its important physical features?

Do they make good soldiers? I am interested in the Czechs and would like to learn their language by mail or otherwise.

Do you know if there are schools teaching their language in either Detroit or Chicago?"—Harold Hastings, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

Reply, by Mr. von Keler:—Your questions about Czecho-Slovakia have just reached me.

Yes—a Bohemian is practically the same as a "Czech," when he speaks Czech! "Bohemian" used to signify an inhabitant of Bohemia, and Bohemia was populated by German-Bohemians and Czech-Bohemians, who usually fought each other like cats and dogs. The official language of Bohemia (Czecho-Slovakia) is Czech, although every official understands German.

Have never found that Czechs are especially pre-eminent as singers and actors, although there are some good artists who hail from Bohemia. As a nation, Italians are better singers and actors than the Czechs.

I should not advise you to try to learn the Czech language "by mail." It is exceedingly difficult and very hard to pronounce for an "English" tongue. You might have better success with the phonograph method. There are Czech schools in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, Pittsburgh—schools in which you could learn to speak Czech.

Czecho-Slovakia is hilly; its main features are deep fir woods in the Northwest; rolling prairie land in the center and southeast. The common grains, such as rye, wheat and oats form the mainstay of the farmers, with sugar beet culture an important factor. Wages are very low, and the country is poor in cash resources. The climate resembles that of northern New York State.

Do Czechs make good soldiers? That is an odd question. A country that has been the battlefield of Europe for a thousand years, that produced such men as Wallenstein and his fighting armies, must be full of fighting spirit.

But why pick on the Czech nation as a whole and subject them to such a question?

Mexico

ONE hundred and six things that you must have if you wish to enter this occasionally turbulent country. The first one hundred things are dollars.

Request—"Two of us are thinking of a trip into Mexico this winter, and would like some information on the following points:

1. Are passports required?
2. What are the immigration regulations of Mexico."—MARTIN MURPHY, Jackson, Mich.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—To enter the Republic of Mexico you will be required to have passports, certificates of vaccination, receipt for a head tax, if you intend doing any hunting, a hunting license and an individual identification card. Firearms are not allowed to be taken across the line without a special permit, and you will have to have at least one hundred dollars above the fare to your destination. If you intend going in a car the car will have to be registered on the Mexican side.

It requires more money now to enter that country than it cost a few years ago to tour the entire country. The Mexicans are now attempting to put across their slogan "Mexico for the Mexicans" and the American people are assisting greatly in helping to pay off the Mexican war debts.

ONE of the first to learn to fly after we entered the war, Lt.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., D. S. C., D. S. M., Croix de Guerre, Air Service Commander of the First Corps during the Meuse-Argonne operations and participant in six major engagements, has devoted himself to the study of aeronautics ever since he gave up civilian life to become a member of the First Provisional Squadron organized by Col. Bowling at Governor's Island back in 1917. His answer to an inquirer in this issue of A. A. will indicate how profound that study has been. It will also indicate how exacting are the requirements that must be met by our Ask Adventure experts. If you wish to learn more about these requirements with a view to becoming an expert we shall be glad to answer any questions. Address JOSEPH COX, care of *Adventure*.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine. All questions on actual travel should be addressed to "Adventure's Travel Association," care *Adventure*, not to this department. All questions, however, on equipment (except ordinary travel equipment) should be addressed to this department, not to "Straight Goods."

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*.

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard small launch river and lake tripping and cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 5742 Stony Island Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Yachting BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash., or HENRY W. RUBINKAM, Chicago Yacht Club, Box 507, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Boating GEORGE W. SUTTON, 6 East 45th St., New York City.

Motor Camping John D. Long, 1133 Broadway, New York City.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, operating cost, legislative restrictions, public safety.*—Edmund B. Neil, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.* John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers *including foreign and American makes.*—Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons—Robert E. Gardner, 423 Wilson Ave., Columbus. O.

Archery Earl B. Powell, Terrace Hotel, Sidney, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.*—Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.*—Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Hiking Claude P. Fordyce, M.D., Falls City, Neb.

Camp Cooking Horace Kephart, Bryson City, N. C.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions on investment excluded.*—Victor Shaw, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry in the United States *Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.*—William R. Barbour, care *Adventure.*

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General Information.*—R. T. Newman, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions on stock promotion.*—Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign Lieut. Glenn R. Townsend, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—Lieut. Francis Greene, U. S. N. R., 2200 Kinzie Ave., Racine, Wis.

State Police Francis H. Bent, Jr., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Patrick Lee, 73 Kingsboro Ave., Gloversville, N. Y.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.*—Thomas H. Dameron, 911 S. Union Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Ornithology Prof. Archibald Rutledge, Mercersburg Academy, Mercersburg, Pa.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—Paul L. Anderson, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey or Sigismund Blumann, Claus Spreckel Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition, history and psychology; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration, national development and descent* (*authorities and bibliographies*). (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues, their affinities and plans for their study.*—Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 W. 23rd St., New York City.

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—Arthur Woodward, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City.

Taxidermy Seth W. Bullock care *Adventure.*

Herpetology *General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.*—Dr. G. K. Noble, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St. and Central Park West, New York, N. Y.

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.*—Dr. Frank E. Lutz, Ramsey, N. J.

Stamps H. A. Davis, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals Howland Wood, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

SPORTS

Baseball Frederick Lieb, *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Track Jackson Scholz, 73 Farmington Ave., Long Meadow, Mass.

Tennis Fred Hawthorne, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball Joe F. Carr, 16 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio.

Bicycling Arthur J. LeaMond, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming Louis DeB. Handley, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating Frank Schreiber, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. Price, 160 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Boxing James P. Dawson, The New York *Times*, Times Square, New York City.

GEOGRAPHICAL SECTIONS.—Covering climate, topography, natural resources (minerals, timber, agriculture, live-stock, water-power), commerce and industry, institutions, inhabitants, customs, languages, history, opportunities, living conditions, health, outdoor life, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, equipment, expeditions, adventure, general information. Additional subjects covered by any expert, are mentioned in his section.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (See next two sections.)—Beriah Brown, Coupeville, Wash.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping.*—Harry E. Rieseberg, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—Captain A. E. Dingle, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—Capt. Dingle, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—Capt. Dingle, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean* (*Siberian Waters*).—Capt. C. L. Oliver, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Philippine Islands Buck Connor, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz.

Borneo Capt. Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.*

★ **New Guinea** *Questions regarding the measures of policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. Armit, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia.

★ **New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa.** Tom L. Mills, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★ **Australia and Tasmania** Phillip Norman, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
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Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan.*—Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York.

Asia Part 2 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 3 *Southern and Eastern China.*—Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 4 *Western China, Burma, Tibet.* Capt. Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.*

★ **Asia Part 5** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—George W. Twomey, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China, and Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Asia Part 6 *Japan.*—Sidney Herschel Small, San Rafael, Calif.

Asia Part 7 *Persia, Arabia.*—Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.*

Asia Minor.—Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

Africa Part 1 *Egypt.*—Dr. Neville Whymant, 345 West 23rd St., New York City.

✠**Africa Part 2** *Sudan.* W. T. Moffat, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England.

Africa Part 3 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, Caravan trade and caravan routes.*—Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 5 *Morocco.* George E. Holt, care *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand.*—Captain F. J. Franklin, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss.

✠**Africa Part 8** *Portuguese East.* R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.* Lieut. William Jenna, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.* Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 3 *Finland, Lapland and Russia.* In the case of Russia, political topics outside of historical facts will not be discussed.—Aleko E. Lilius, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—Theodore von Keler, 153 Waverly Place, New York City.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C.

✠**Europe Part 6** *Great Britain.*—Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. Colborn, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LeBleu, 57 Benson St., Glen Ridge, N. J.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium and Luxemburg.*—J. D. Newsom, 4 rue des Toxandres, Etterbeek, Brussels, Belgium.

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland*—Dr. Albert Leeman, Kramgasse 82, Bern.

Europe Part 11 *France.*—Cyrus S. Roberts, 38 E. 85th St., New York City.

Europe Part 12 *Spain.*—J. D. Newsom, 4 rue des Toxandres, Etterbeek, Brussels, Belgium.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—Edgar Young, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil.*—Paul Vanorden Shaw, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N. Y.

West Indies *Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern. Border States of old Mexico Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.* J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southern. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—C. R. Mahaffey, 236 Fox Ave., San José, Calif.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern. Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. Russell Sheets, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Newfoundland.—C. T. James, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—Victor Shaw, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading.—Fred L. Bowden, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.* Jas. F. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Also Indian life and habits: Hudson's Bay Co. posts. No questions answered on trapping for profit.—S. E. Sangster ("Canuck") 1805 Seroh Bldg., 28-40 Adams Ave., West, Detroit, Mich.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. Robinson, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin.*—Reece Hague, The Pas, Manitoba.

Canada Part 8 *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta,* Also Yachting.—C. Plowden, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 9 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—Patrick Lee, Tudor Hall, Elmhurst, Long Island.

Alaska. Also mountain work.—Theodore S. Solomons, 1427 Lareta Terrace, Los Angeles, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *Calif., Ore. Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.*—E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St. Los Angeles, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance.—F. H. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colo. and Wyo.*—Frank Earnest, Sugar Loaf, Colo.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—Fred W. Egleston, 1029 Litch Court, Reno, Nev.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. Newman, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. Whiteaker, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—Especially early history of Missouri Valley.—Joseph Mills Hanson, care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 2 *Mo. and Ark. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Especially wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps.*—John B. Thompson, ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 3 *Ind., Ill., Mich., Minn., and Lake Michigan.* Also clamming, natural history, legends.—John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 4 *Mississippi River.* Also routes, connections, itineraries; river-steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions about working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears.—Geo. A. Zeer, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa.

Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms.*—Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also seamanship, navigation, courses, distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. Gardner, 3302 Daisy Ave.; Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Adirondacks, New York.*—Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C. Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling, saws.—Hapsburg Liebe, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 3 *Maryland and District of Columbia.* Also historical places.—Lawrence Edmund Allen, 1505 C St., S. E., Washington, D. C.

Eastern U. S. Part 4 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.*—Howard R. Voight, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn.

Eastern U. S. Part 5 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Eastern Maine. For all territory east of the Penobscot River.*—H. B. Stanwood, East Sullivan, Me.

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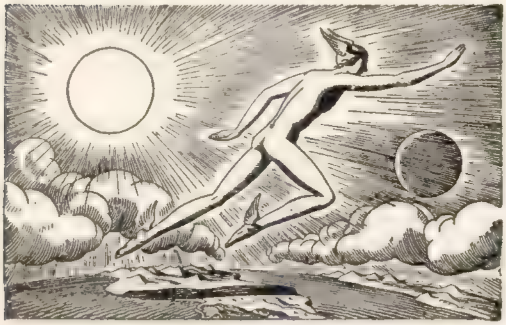


In the West Indies with Stribling

HERE'S a note that the author of "Teeftallow," "Fombombo" and many stories in *Adventure* did not write for publication. When the editor of *Adventure* planned his Caribbean trip he asked Mr. Stribling to tell him a little about the islands he was going to visit. The letter he received was so vivid and interesting that we decided to print it here.

Dear Hoffman,

I am certainly glad your exigencies forced you to write me a letter. I hope troubles will come your way so thick and fast that you will write me often.

In re the Caribbean. Both Barbados and Trinidad are very interesting. I hate to see you pass up the lesser islands, Antigua, St. Kitts, etc., etc. I hope your boat stops at each one during the day and sails at night as mine did. You'll have time to mosey around and look the little islands over during a day.

Try to read a little of the history of Barbados before you go there because that island is mainly historical and if you don't know it you don't get it. . . .

In Barbados I got a big kick in visiting the schooners in the Basin—that's not the proper name for it, but it is where the Bridge is and boats are stuffed in until you can walk across them. Look up that old church just across the bridge as you go into town. That is what gave Bridgetown its name, the possession of that Bridge. Insist on eating "grafted mangoes" not the ordinary; the grafted are the most delicious fruit God ever made. The ordinary the most ordinary. Don't board at a hotel, get a private boarding house and eat flying fish morning, noon and night. If you have time you can stop at Antigua and go over to another little island where wild pigs are hunted and spear a pig. If you possibly can—I suppose it is impossible—go to Saba, a Dutch volcano with a village in the crater, where they make ships and swing them down the mountain side on ropes into the sea.

The trouble about me is the main things I remember are folks. The actual physical background of the islands were simply backgrounds against which somebody stood out for me. I remember walking out of Bridgetown, going up to an old house, looking at some old furniture and getting some negroes to climb a cocoanut tree and throw me some green cocoanuts, and that was a very charming day, though it can't be repeated. Also in Bridgetown, I walked about the street gnawing a mango just as the negroes did—which is impractical for you and Mrs. Hoffman—you'd laugh at each other and quit.

Now Trinidad is more do-able—of course there's the pitch lake, and when you go down from Port of Spain, put up at the dormitory of the American company that works the pitch, and get the geologist to take you over the oil wells they're digging and explain oil to you, also show you the English wells, if they aren't all dry by now. Also in Port of Spain be sure and take in Maracca Falls—a thin beautiful veil of water falling over a mountain side into a wilderness of ferns. The stones on which you stand have water all around them between the cracks. Take a bit of bread or meat and watch the little trout grab it and swing on until you can just lift them up hanging to the meat. On the trip to the Falls if you are walking the latter fourth, you can gather all the wild grapefruit, oranges, lemons, sapodilloes, mangoes you can eat. In fact you'll soon get stuffed browsing on the way out. I walked out with a Chinaman from Demarara. Look at the butterflies in the forest; they don't fly like ours, they go like streaks of color.

In Caracas, you will see the most beautiful painting in the world. Michelena's "Last Supper" in the Cathedral. There are other Michelenas in other churches, look them up. He was America's most poetic painter.

Go to see Bolivar's birthplace in Caracas. Try to know a little about him before you go. The pleasantest place to board in Caracas is up in La Pastora, a suburb toward the mountain. If you have time climb the trail up the mountain until you can see La Guira and the sea far below. There is an old Spanish fort right on the crest. It's a long walk but a glorious one.

There are some prodigious caves near Caracas, which I never entered myself and the peons will not enter, but they are immense and fearsome as my friends who did go declared.

From Trinidad a boat trip up the Orinoco to Guidad Bolivar will be a thing you'll never forget. The Orinoco is amazing. Come back on the same boat and it'll take you about four or five days.

These are suggestions, kind of hopeless suggestions because I am thinking of my moods. You, manufacturing your own moods, might like something else. By the way it is possible to go through the country from Guidad Bolivar to Caracas—expensive, fatiguing, but real life in the Ilanoes. Inquire about this in Guidad Bolivar—and then go back on the boat.

Best luck.—(Signed) T. S. Stribling.

Hinky-Dinky Parley Voo!

YELL it at the top of your lungs this year on transport, in Paris or at the front, and not an M. P. to stop you! The A. E. F. is going back. The same steamship lines whose camouflaged fleets stole through U-boat dangers are sending twenty-eight of the greatest liners in transatlantic service on this second movement. Railroads are making special round-trip rates from home towns to ports of embarkation. Leading tourist companies are cooperating in plans for tours to battlefields and familiar districts of Belgium and France, at the most reasonable rates. European governments are welcoming American Legionnaires without benefit of passport or visé. (And that saves considerable time and money, soldier.) If you're going over in September better make your arrangements now. Reservations for the France Convention of the American Legion close May 15, 1927, and if you want to insure a place with your delegation get in early.

From Your Desk to Deck Chair

IF YOU'LL be able to get away for some sort of a trip this summer or fall, you are missing a lot of fun if you don't sit back and play with that idea every once in awhile.

Unless he is among the few who casually flit from North to South and from Lake Placid to the Mediterranean all through the year every traveler goes through three stages. He looks forward to his trip and plans it; he goes on the trip; he comes back and talks about it. And not the least enjoyable phase is the planning end. It's important too. If you're going to Europe, for instance, this is not too early to browse about among books and maps and sailing schedules, arrange your itinerary, your passports and visas, and make your reservations.

Perhaps you are going on a conducted tour. Well, there are tours and tours. You can choose tours with business people, with a professional group, with university professors or college students, with your old buddies in the A. E. F. You can take a short jaunt to France and back for as little as two hundred and fifty dollars. Or tour five countries in five weeks—for a little over four hundred dollars. Conducted tours have been intelligently developed, and there is much to be said in their favor, especially for inexperienced travelers.

Those of you who prefer to travel independently have even a greater field for desk exploration. You may sail to any one of a dozen European ports at rates ranging all the way from eighty dollars to two thousand dollars. After you land—perhaps you like to dip into the life of other countries or are interested in architecture, or seek gaiety, or out-door life.

The central office of Adventure's Travel Association is ready to help you now with any plans for this year. We are glad to give advice on trips to take, things to see, transportation facilities, hotels, and other travel problems; and arrange to have informative literature, booklets and maps sent to you. Also, in back of this office is the whole staff of Ask Adventure experts, who are ready to give the benefit of their experiences in countries where they have lived and learned to know the customs and places of interest that the average traveler never has a chance to discover.

These points are important if you wish to use A. T. A. service—

1. Register for guest-membership by sending your name and address to Adventure's Travel Association, Butterick Building, New York City. A membership card will be issued to you which entitles you to use the services of all A. T. A. stations as they are established all over the world. Guest membership free for the year of 1927.
2. In consulting the bureau here outline as definitely as you can the trip you plan to take and make your questions as specific as possible.
3. Enclose the necessary two-cent stamp for return postage.—L. G.

Old SONGS that Men have Sung

Conducted by R. W. GORDON

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them. Although this department is conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and if *each request is accompanied with self-addressed envelope and sufficient reply postage* (not attached). Write to Mr. R. W. Gordon direct (*not* to the magazine), care of Adventure, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

HERE are a couple of songs of the plains. Both are of the broadside type, but both were widely sung in days gone by. "Wandering Jack" I have not run across in any other version, but "Sanford Burns" has many variants.

Wandering Jack

(*Text from Homer Challenger, California.*)

Come all you jolly cowboys
  I'll sing for you a song;
It is a simple story,
  And I won't detain you long.
I'll tell to you the reason
  That I am forced to roam,
And why I am so friendless
  And never had a home.

My home is in my saddle
  Upon my horse's back;
I am a roving cowboy
  And they call me Wandering Jack.
They say I am an orphan,
  My name I never knew,
But I've often heard the story
  I now will tell to you.

In eighteen hundred and sixty-eight
  A little immigrant band
Was massacred by Indians
  While traveling overland.
They burned my poor father,
  And my mother had to die,
And the only living captives
  Were two small girls and I.

We were rescued from the Indians
  By a brave and noble man
Who followed the thieving Indians
  And fought them hand to hand.
He was famous for his bravery
  While on the enemy's track;
He was a jolly cowboy
  And they called him Texas Jack.

Oh, Jack would tell the story,
  If only he was here,
Of trials and of hardships
  On the wild west frontier,
Of how they burned our father
  And how mother had to die,
And how they scalped our comrades
  Right there before our eye.

Oh, I've worked upon the roundup
  And I've worked upon the trail,
I've shot the shaggy buffalo
  And I've heard the coyote wail,
I've slept upon my saddle,
  All covered by the moon,
And I expect to keep right on
  Until I reach my doom.

"Sanford Burns" I suspect had its origin on the stage. Versions can be found in several paper songsters. In the issue of this department for October 20, 1923, I printed a somewhat similar song which told of the hardships of a railroad man "way out in Idaho."

Sanford Burns

(*Text of Robert E. Howard, Texas.*)

My name is Sanford Burns
  And I come from Noble town.
I've roamed this wide world over
  And I've roamed this wide world round,
I've had my ups and downs in life
  And better days I've saw,
But I never knew what misery was
  Till I hit Arkansaw.

'Twas eighteen hundred eighty-two
  In the merry month of June
I landed in Hot Springs
  One sultry afternoon.
Up came to me a living skeleton
  Who handed me his paw,
Invited me to his hotel,
  "The best in Arkansaw."

I followed my conductor
  Unto his boarding place;
There was poverty depicted
  On his melancholy face,
His hair hung down in rat tails,
  He had a long lantern jaw,
And he's a photograph of all the gents
  That come from Arkansaw.

I started out next morning
To catch an early train.
Says he, "You'd better stay with me
I have some land to drain.
I'll give you fifty cents a day
Your board and washing too,—
You'll find you'll be a different man
When you leave Arkansaw."

I worked for that wretch six months,
Jesse Herald was his name,
Six feet seven inches in his stockinged feet
As tall as any crane.
He fed me on corn-dodgers
As hard as any rock
Till my teeth began to loosen
And my jaws began to knock.

I got so thin on sassafras tea
I could hide behind a straw,—
Indeed I was a different man
When I left Arkansaw!
And if I ever see that place again,
I give to you my paw,
'Twill be through a telescope
From here to Arkansaw!

MR. C. W. LOUTZENHISER, who sends in the following song, says: "After the Pullman strike in '94, the switchmen and firemen of Chicago and some other sections were blacklisted from Massachusetts to Frisco. It was years before most of them could get to work on any road under their own names. The winter of '96 a switchman drifted in with this song."

Been on the hummer since 'ninety-four,
Last job I had was on the Lake Shore,
Lost my office in the A. R. U.
And I won't get it back till nineteen two.

And I'm on the hog train
Flagging my meals,
Riding the brake beams
Close to the wheels.

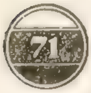
Been all over those western plains,
Seen every outfit and master of trains,
The I. N. G. and the K. M. T.,
Gulf of Colorado and the Santa Fé.

And I'm still on the hog train
Flagging my meals,
Riding the brake beams
Close to the wheels.

And now, Trainmaster, my story's through,
My little nut I'll prepare to screw.
If you've got no job I'll be on my way
And call again some other day.

And I'll be on the hog train
Flagging my meals,
Riding the brake beams
Close to the wheels.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions concerning them, to—R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*, Spring & Macdougal Streets, N. Y. C.



Camp-Fire Buttons—Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Exact size shown. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere. When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed *un*stamped envelope. If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Butterick Publishing Company, *not* to any individual.

Forwarding Mail—This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Identification Cards—Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope. Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese: "In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Please make out check or money order to the Butterick Publishing Company.

Straight Goods—This department has been omitted from this issue in order to give space to "A. T. A."

Books You Can Believe—Verdicts of our experts on non-fiction books appear in alternate issues.

Lost Trails—This department for finding missing friends and relatives is printed only in alternate issues.

The Trail *Ahead*

The next issue of ADVENTURE, *March 15th*

Beginning *a New Serial*

Cockades

By Meade Minnigerode

White cockades for proud royalty that was gone, tricolor cockades for the sturdy young nation coming into its own—everybody wore a cockade of one kind and hated the wearers of the other. Yet in a little town outside New York lived a lad who wore no colors but whom both sides watched with furtive eager interest.

An History *of* *The* Strange Adventures *and* Signal Deliverances *of* Mr. Philip Ashton, Jun.

Mr. J. S. French brings to us a unique old document—a first-person narrative of a young New Englander who preferred a castaway's life on a lonely island to pirate gold and dishonor.

The Strange Adventure of Tommy Lawn

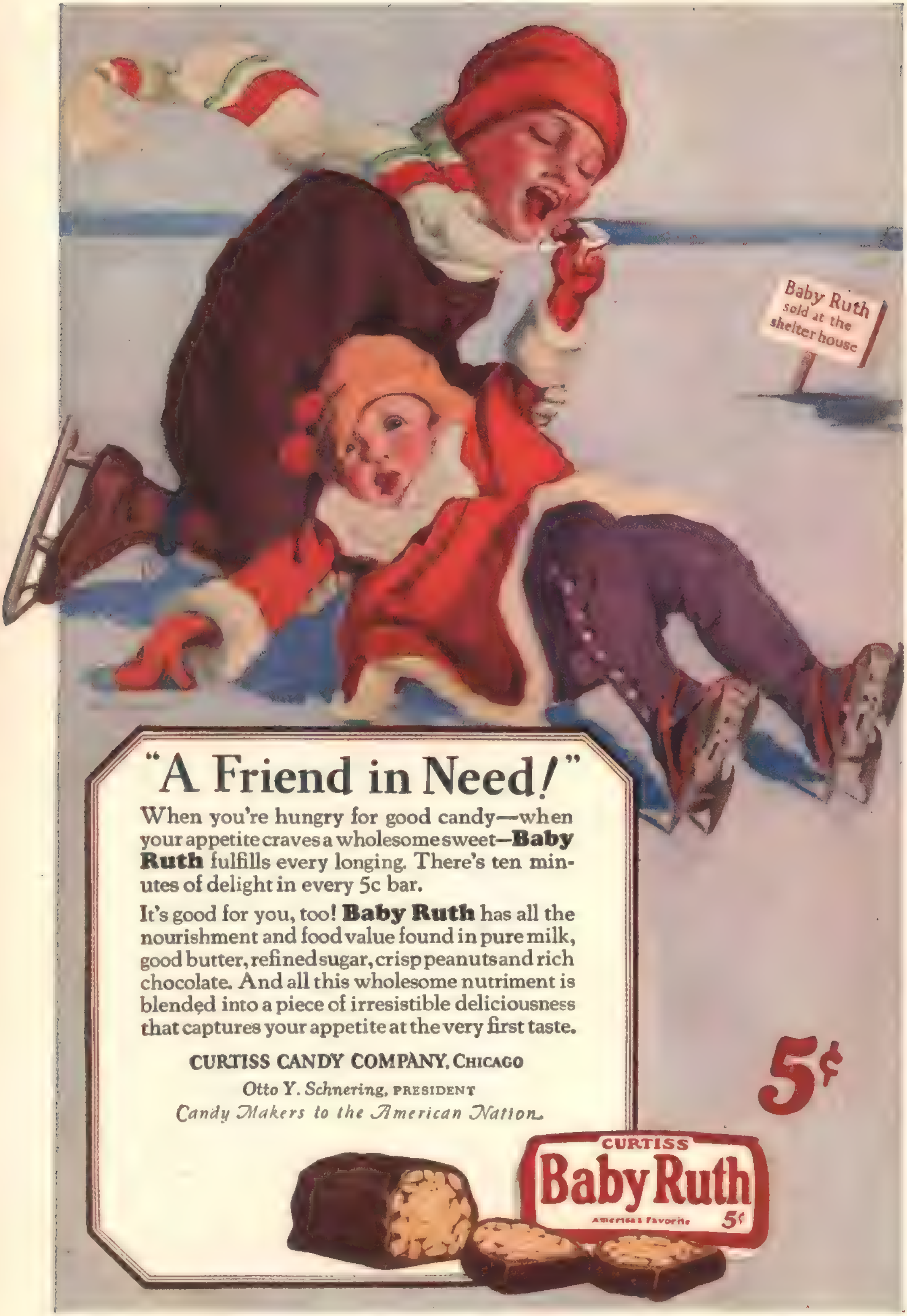
By Albert Richard Wetjen

When twenty-four tons of ship and cargo meet head-on with an immovable iceberg the men aboard ship are bound to meet with unexpected experiences. But it remained for the young second mate to do a round trip to that fabled place called Fiddlers' Green. This is an off-the-trail story.

And—*Other Good Stories*

Part II of Smoky Seas, by Clements Ripley, *in forbidden waters;* Three Thieves—*and an ancient jade seal,* by Charles Gilson; Airways, by A. A. Caffrey, *pilot* Rutter *invents a new game;* Old Hart's Guns, by Hugh Pendexter, *fists were* Malin's *weapons;* El Peladito, by H. H. Dunn, *Yaqui honor and a few pence;* Company for the Night, by Barry Scobee, *Old* Dorsey *lived in a lonely place.*

Adventure is out on the 1st and 15th of the month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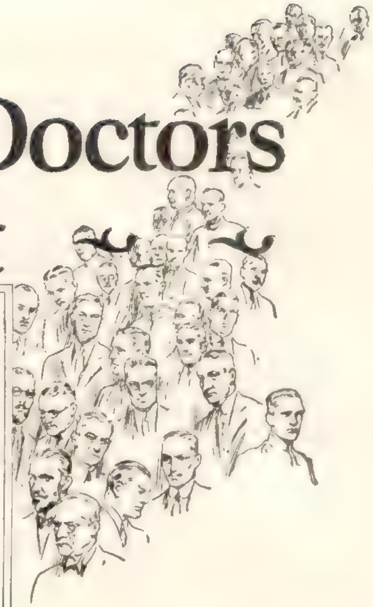

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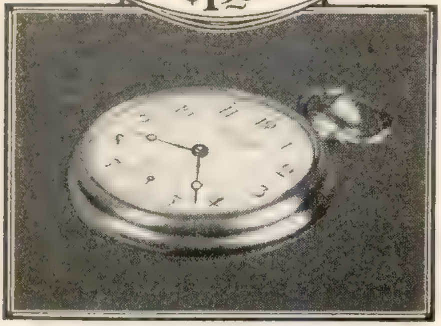

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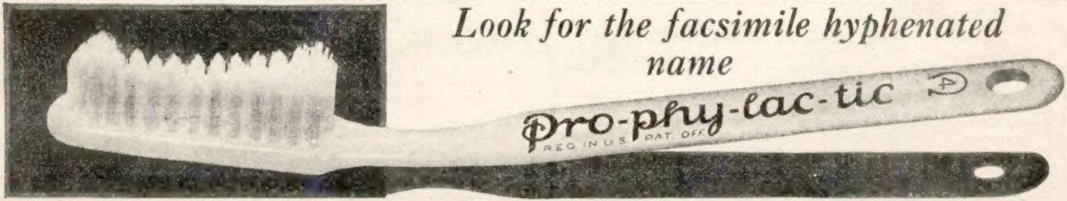

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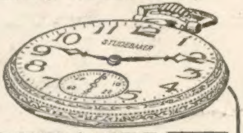

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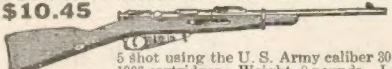

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"This is WJZ"—A Voice Millions Hear

Clear, resonant, appealing, J. Andrew White's voice is constantly safeguarded

AS the dean of radio announcers, J. Andrew White's voice is known to people throughout the land. Mr. White has won a large following of admirers because of the constant dependability of his voice, ever in perfect condition. He smokes Lucky Strikes, both for finer flavor and throat protection.

Lucky Strikes have become the favorites of men whose priceless voices thrill their audiences, as they have with the millions because, first, they afford *greater enjoyment*, and, second, they are certain not to irritate even the most sensitive throat.

Smoke Lucky Strikes. They give added pleasure—you'll like them.

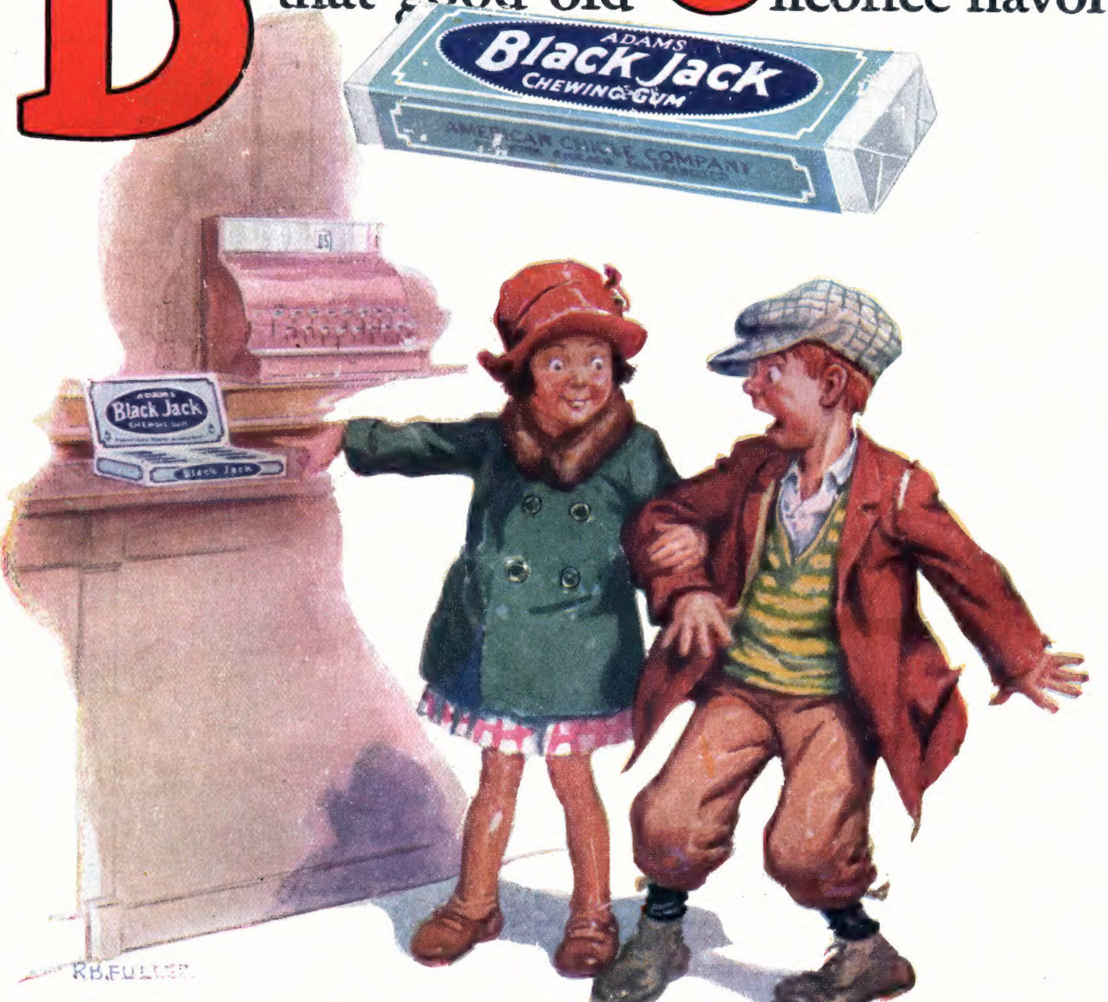
LUCKY STRIKE
TWENTY
LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES

"It's toasted"

Your Throat Protection

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor"



$1000

FOR TITLES TO THIS BLACK JACK PICTURE

8 cash prizes will be paid as follows

1st Prize	$500
2nd Prize	250
3rd Prize	100
4th Prize	50
5th to 8th Prizes ($25 each)	100

Here's fun for every member of the family. This picture needs a title. Perhaps chewing Black Jack and enjoying its good old licorice flavor, although not a condition of this contest, will help you to find the winning title that fully expresses the story this picture tells. Everybody residing in the United States or Canada is eligible except employees of the manufacturers of Black Jack Chewing Gum.

· RULES ·

1: Each entry must contain a title suggestion in 10 words or less and the name and address of the sender. **2:** Contestants may submit as many answers as they wish. In sending in suggested titles white paper or the reverse side of Black Jack wrappers may be used. **3:** All entries for this contest must be sent to "Black Jack Titles", Dept. 1, American Chicle Company, Long Island City, New York, and must be in before midnight, May 25th, 1927. Winners to be announced as soon thereafter as possible. **4:** Each entry must be sent first class mail, postage prepaid. **5:** Originality of thought, cleverness of idea, and clearness of expression and neatness will count. **6:** The judges will be a committee appointed by the makers of Black Jack and their decisions will be final. If there are ties, each tying contestant will be awarded the prize tied for.

Study the picture. Think of Black Jack's delicious licorice flavor. Then send in your title or titles on plain white paper the size of a Black Jack wrapper (2¾x3) or on a Black Jack wrapper. Contest closes at midnight, May 25th, 1927.